

# BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

JULY-AUGUST 1995

10 SHOWS IN ONE COMBINED THE GREAT LONDON CIRCUS SANGER'S ROYAL BRITISH MENAGERIE. 10 TENTS IN ONE TICKET CONSOLIDATED

\$100,000. CHALLENGE  
THAT THIS IS THE ONLY

## BABY ELEPHANT

EVER BORN IN BONDAGE  
IN THIS OR ANY OTHER COUNTRY.

MOTHER AND BABY SLEEPING

EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE BUILDING, IN WHICH THE BABY WAS BORN.

ELEPHANT HOUSE.

WINTER QUARTERS.

INTERIOR VIEW OF THE BUILDING, IN WHICH THE BABY WAS BORN

CORNER RIDGE AVENUE & 23RD STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PENN. MARCH 10TH 1880

MOTHER AND BABY PLAYING

MOTHER AND BABY

FATHER, MOTHER & BABY.

A SUCKING BABY ELEPHANT.

ONLY ONE EVER BORN IN CAPTIVITY IN ANY COUNTRY. BORN MARCH 10TH 1880. AT 10 1/2 HRS. P.M. PENN. HEIGHT 23 1/2 POUNDS. HEIGHT 34 INCHES. LENGTH TO FIRST JOINT OF FORE FOOT 5 INCHES. LENGTH OF SECOND JOINT TO ELBOW 11 INCHES. FROM ELBOW TO TOP OF SHOULDER 21 INCHES. AROUND CHEST 45 INCHES. AROUND BELLY 45 INCHES. WIDTH BETWEEN EYES 8 1/2 INCHES. AROUND HEAD IN FRONT OF EYES 34 INCHES. FROM POINT OF SHOULDER TO HAW 25 INCHES. FROM SHOULDER TO ROOT OF TAIL 36 INCHES. FROM GROUND TO STIFLE JOINT 16 INCHES. LENGTH OF TRUNK 12 INCHES. CIRCUMFERENCE OF THICK END OF TRUNK 9 INCHES. CIRCUMFERENCE OF SMALL END OF TRUNK 6 INCHES. LENGTH OF TAIL 40 INCHES.

NURSING AT SIDE OF MOTHER.

THE MOTHER "HE BE"

PROTECTING HER BABY.

UNITED WITH COOPER, BAILEY & CO. THE GREAT INTERNATIONAL 10 ALLIED SHOWS.



# BANDWAGON

The Journal of the Circus Historical Society

Leon Frederick  
208 E. College #276  
Branson, MO 65616

1054

## 1995 CHS CONVENTION

Members who missed the great 1994 CHS convention will want to participate in the special activities which comprise the 1995 event on October 18-21 in San Antonio, Texas. For the first time, the CHS will be formally visiting the Hertzberg Circus Collection and Museum. The Museum Administrator, Bob O'Connor, and his staff are making special preparations to host various parts of the convention and will take registrants behind the scenes for a special look at the famed Hertzberg collection.

Cutting-edge historical papers by learned members of the society, visits to the Hertzberg, attendance at the Al Zafar Shrine Circus, a southwest style banquet, the bargain-filled CHS auction and a reception at the Hertzberg followed by a twilight supper on the San Antonio River are a few of the features of the 1995 gathering.

Please complete the Registration Card enclosed with this issue and mail it with the appropriate payment to the address noted on the card. The registration fee of \$75.00 includes all of the activities noted above.

Registrants should make their own reservations with the convention hotel, which is the newly opened Fairfield Inn Downtown, telephone (210) 299-1000. A discounted rate of \$59.00 has been established for CHS registrants for single and double occupancy. Trolley, shuttle and cab service is readily available in the San Antonio area. Registrants may desire to forgo renting a car and paying for parking because of the readily available and economical transportation.

The San Antonio area has much to offer in terms of general recreation, including the famous river walk, the Alamo and a wonderful assortment of restaurants and shopping establishments. Registration cutoff is October 1, 1995.

Those who wish to donate material to the auction should bring it with them to San Antonio. If you would like to present a paper or discussion advise Fred Dahlinger in advance as noted on the card enclosed with this issue.

CHS members routing through Dallas-Fort Worth may also wish to visit the Circus World Museum produced circus, the Mandalay Circus, which will be playing at Irving, Texas (adjacent to Lake Caroline) from October 13 to 22.

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FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor  
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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

This lithograph was used by the Cooper, Bailey & Co. Great London Circus in 1880. It was printed by the Strobbridge Litho Company.

The color print is in the circus collection of the Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida.

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1966-Jan.-Feb.  
1967-July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.  
1968-All but Jan.-Feb.  
1969-July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1970-All but July-Aug., Sept.-Oct.  
1971-All but Mar.-Ap., May-June.  
1972-All available.  
1973-All but Nov.-Dec.  
1974-All but Mar.-Ap.; May-June.  
1975-All available.  
1976-All but Jan.-Feb., Nov.-Dec.  
1977-All but Mar.-Ap.  
1978-All available.  
1979-All but Jan.-Feb.  
1980-1986-All available.  
1987-All but Nov.-Dec.  
1988-1995-All available.

Price is \$3.00 each. Add \$2.00 postage for one issue, \$5.00 for more than one issue. Please select substitutes in case we are out of any of above.

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In the fall of 1910 additional improvements were made to the Baraboo winter quarters. The September 22 *Baraboo News* noted: "Work has begun on a large paint shop for Ringling Brothers. The building will be 60 x 100 feet and located on the north side of Water Street on the land recently purchased. (This the present location of Industrial Coils whose president is CHS member Jim Kieffer.) The structure will be of brick and contain a heating plant so that work can be done in all kinds of weather and with dispatch."

"An addition of 33 x 69 feet is also being built on the south side of the elephant house. There will be a loft above for the storage of hay. In the past the feed has been exposed to the weather."

The October 13, 1910 *Sauk County Democrat* reported: "The old car shops near the railroad engine house will be raised and all of the work on cars will be done at the new car shops erected during the past year."

"A new horse barn with a capacity of seventy-five horses will be erected on the farm near Lynn Avenue."

The November 17 *Baraboo News* reported: "Much work on the new yards for Ringling Brothers has been done during the past few days. Teams have been grading the land and trackmen have been laying the steel. Heretofore the rolling stock of the big show has been stored on the tracks of the Chicago & Northwestern, but now the circus folk will be able to care for their own property. About two miles of rails have been laid for the sawdust-scented cars."

When the Ringling and Forepaugh-Sells shows returned at the end of the 1910 season the quarters were better suited to handle the large amount of equipment.

Plans for the 1911 tour started in the fall of 1910. All new canvas was ordered from Thomson & Vandiveer in December. The tent firm wrote Al Ringling on December 14, 1910: "We hereby acknowledge receipt of your order for new canvas for the Forepaugh-Sells circus for season of 1911."

"Big top, 160 foot

# THE FINAL YEARS ADAM FOREPAUGH AND SELLS BROS. BIG UNITED SHOWS

## Part Two 1911

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

round top, extension eaves; five 50 foot middle pieces; 12 foot six inch side wall, extra wall. Top to be made of Boyles 8 ounce drill. Side wall 6 1/2 ounce drill, top to be made in six parts to lace. \$3,850.

"Menagerie, 90 foot round top, extension eaves; four 40 foot middle pieces' 12 1/2 banded side wall; middle pieces to lace on the ridge, \$1,457.50.

"Marqua (sic), 30 foot front, 24 foot deep; netting and back piece; shaffing sack; to have straight front, netting on sides; wall to be loose from first to second side pole, so it can be open or closed according to weather, \$100.

"Pony tent, 20 x 30 feet; 6 foot side wall and troughs; detachable side wall all round. \$92.50.

"Side show, 67 foot round top, extension eaves; two 30 foot middle pieces; 10 foot banded side wall. This includes Marqua (sic) awning, 7 x 10 feet & back piece made of Ruby strips. \$527.50."

The auto loop car rigging inside the 1911 Forepaugh-Sells big top. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise credited.

In addition the order included five 14 foot flags for the big top. Five 10 foot flags for menagerie. Three eight foot flags for the side show. Four 8 foot flags for the stable top. Three 6 foot flags for the cook-house. Three 8 foot flags for the dressing top. The total cost for the flags was \$126.50.

Three cars were added to the show for the 1911 season, making a 50 car show traveling in two sections. The rail equipment consisted of three advertisements cars, No. 1-3; nine stock cars, No. 14-22; four elephant cars, No. 26-29; twenty-

five flats, No. 30-38 and 40-55 and nine sleepers, No. 60-64, 67 (Al Ringling's private car), 68-69.

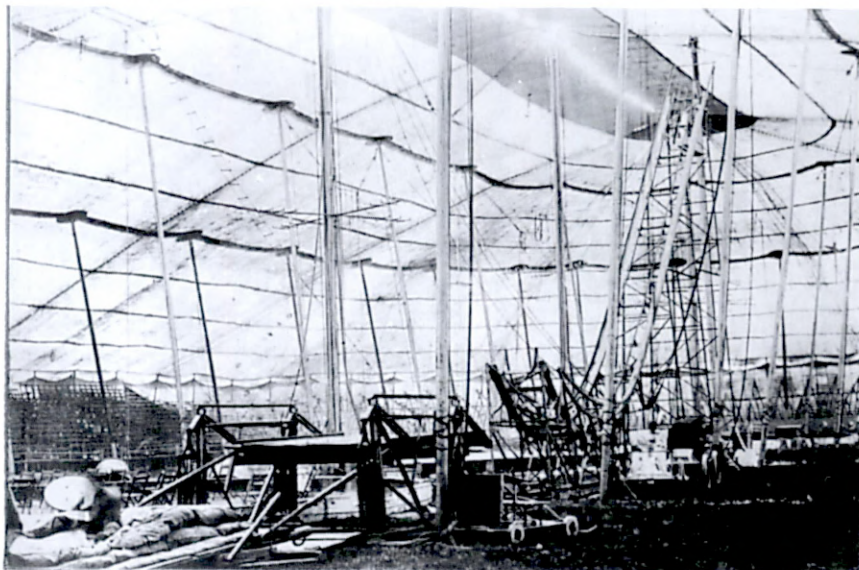
Additional wagons were added. The sixty-one horse act was dropped and the feature of the show was a loop the loop auto. At least three more wagons were required to carry the apparatus used in the act. The Russia tableaux wagon, built in 1903 for the Ringling show and used on Ringling in 1910, was added for the 1911 parade. All of the wagons were repainted for the 1911 tour. Photos of the 1911 show indicate that the baggage wagons were painted red or green.

On September 22, 1910 Carl Hagenbeck wrote the Ringlings offering two giraffes. One was a good male, the other, a female, had a deformed leg. Ringling bought the male, paying \$4,000. The animal left Germany on October 1 and in due course arrived in Baraboo. It may have been the giraffe on the Forepaugh show in 1911.

In prior years Forepaugh-Sells, Ringling and Barnum had used loop the loop thrill acts to close per-

formances. In 1906 the Les Freres Ancillotti Dip of Death act appeared on Barnum & Bailey. In 1907 L'Auto Bolide, driven by Isabelle Butler, was on that show. The Le Belle Roche act with two autos passing in the air was on Ringling in 1908 after having been on Forepaugh-Sells in 1907. The La Roche Sisters returned to Barnum in 1909.

On February 4 the show signed a contract stating: "Charles Morok to furnish apparatus and double somersaulting automobile



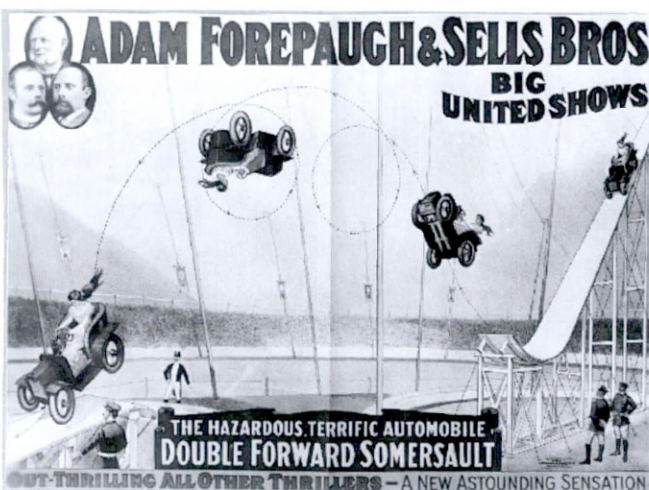


act; same as furnished to the Ringling show in 1909. Also to furnish mechanic to keep the apparatus in order and produce the act; also to furnish a lady to ride the automobile. Show to furnish property men to assist erect and put up the apparatus under the instructions of Mr. Morok's manager." It was noted that Morok's employees were not to participate in entries or parades. It was also noted that there were to be no changes in the personnel of the act except for the lady rider. Morok received \$250 a week. The contract contained the standard clause that the show had the option of renewing the contract for the 1912 season.

A press hand-out in 1911 described the act: "The most dangerous and terrific circus thriller is being presented this season with the Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. circus by a young French woman, Mlle Marie Petrot. Seated in a heavy automobile she makes a terrific dash down a steep incline, the car and the rider then leap into the air and making two complete somersaults in space before lighting on a spring platform fifty feet away.

"The danger of the act is apparent to all beholders. As the car makes its frightful leap into space, a tragedy seems inevitable. The first turn is made in safety, but this only intensifies the suspense. For the fraction of a second the automobile pauses in the air, bottom up, as though its energy were already spent. This for the audience is the critical moment and many avert their eyes, death to the brave young woman seems certain. As gracefully as a bird wings its way across a meadow, the second somersault is turned and with a heavy crash the car hits the platform."

Morok's \$250 weekly salary for the auto act was equalled only by F. E. Huling who as Capt. Webb earned the same for his seal act. Other 1911 returning acts and their weekly salary included the Ellet Trio, \$25; the Hines-Kimball troupe (six people), \$165; the Alvors (three people), \$135; the Franks (two people), \$75; the Ortaneys (six people), \$130; Fred Lasere, \$30; the Alpine troupe (five people), \$150; the Ty-Bell Sisters (four people), \$150; the Richards Sisters (two people), \$90; and the Minerva Sisters (five people), \$150; the Correias (three people), \$125 and Costello riders (two people), \$125 as replacements for the Oscar Lowande riders.



Strobridge lithograph of the loop car used in 1911.

New acts contracted and their weekly salaries when known were the Riva Larson troupe, contortionists (four people), \$150; the Arnesens, contortionists; the Raschetta brothers, acrobats (three people), \$140; Joe LeFleur, high somersaults, \$50; William Elson (two people), \$25; the Jamaktas, balancing act (five people), \$100; the Laundere brothers, hand balancing; the Aerial LaFayettes; and the Aerial Patts.

Oscar Voght replaced Richard Smith in presenting one of the elephant acts. Edith Costello and Marrietta Correia re-

Capt. Webb seal act lithograph used in 1911.



placed Mamie Lowande and Marie Meers in the menage presentation.

Some changes were made in department heads. Al Mastiff replaced Ed Kelley as side show manager. John Sheehy moved from the front door to press agent back with the show. A. N. Davis and S. W. Beckett replaced Bert Loveridge and Harry Curtis as twenty-four-hour men. C. W. Holland replaced Lee Coleman as big top canvas boss. Clint Finney replaced E. B. Graham as manager of the No. 3 advertising car.

Al Ringling was not on the show all of the time; it is not known who handled the day to day general manager's duties.

A listing of the staff appeared in the March 18 *Billboard*: "Ringling Bros. proprietors, and managers; W. D. Neff, treasurer; Jake D. Newman, advertising agent; Charles C. Wilson, railroad contractor; N. J. Petit, local contractor; Arthur Diggs, contracting press agent; Harry Earl, general press agent; John Sheehy, press agent back with show; R. W. Peckham, excursion agent; Al. Mastiff, manager of side show; William O'Dell, equestrian director; Charles A. Bell, superintendent privileges; John J. Richards, musical director; William Howard, superintendent reserved seat tickets; C. W. Holland, superintendent canvas; Claude Hinkley, superintendent commissary department; L. W. Marshall, superintendent of lights; J. D. Miller, superintendent of properties; Jake Lauer, superintendent of ring stock.

"Henry Welsh, superintendent of baggage stock; Fred Warrell, adjuster; A. N. Davis and S. W. Beckett, twenty-four-hour agents; George Denman, superintendent of elephants; Ed Gribble, boss carpenter; William W. Chambers, superintendent of animals; Thomas Mislereck, blacksmith; A. Diggs, manager advertising car No. 1; Tom Dransfield, manager advertising car No. 2; C. W. Finney, manager advertising car No. 3."

The circus ordered 68,000 sheets of paper from Strobridge for the 1911 season. The sizes ranged from 32 sheet posting bills to 1/2 sheets for window work. An additional 247 sheets of paper from the 1910 tour still on Strobridge shelves was also sent to the show.

After Ringling Bros. left for the April 1 opening at the Chicago



Coliseum the winter quarters crew concentrated on on Forepaugh-Sells. Some of the brothers were in Bridgeport preparing Barnum & Bailey for a March 23 opening at Madison Square Garden.

On March 31 the family was rocked by the death of Otto Ringling, who was at John Ringling's New York home. He had suffered from uremic poisoning and died of Bright's disease. Ringling was fifty-two years of age, the third of seven brothers. The two performances of the Barnum show on April 3 were cancelled in memory of Ringling, who had given practically his entire time and effort to that show since the Ringlings had purchased it. Otto was acknowledged to have been the financial head of the firm.



The Five Graces bandwagon in Iowa Falls, Idaho on September 16, 1911. Chuck Finley collection.

Henry Ringling acquired Otto's interest and became a member of the firm. The use of the portraits on Ringling advertising was discontinued at that time.

The probate records of Otto's estate included inventories of the Barnum, Ringling and Forepaugh-Sells shows. Although the inventory is not 100% accurate the listing of animals provides a view of what was displayed in the 1911 menagerie and the often low valuation assigned to each animal to minimize the size of Otto's estate and thus its taxes: "14 elephants, \$700 each, \$9,800; 7 camels, \$1,400; 1 giraffe (in poor health), \$500; 1 hippopotamus, \$2,000; 2 tigers, \$300 each, \$600; 1 rhinoceros, \$2,000; 2 nilgais, \$100 each, 200; 1 Water Buffalo, \$150; 2 Sacred cattle, \$50; 5 lions, \$1,200; 3 kangaroos, \$300 each; 1 yak, \$150; 2 zebras, \$400; 2 spotted hyenas, \$300; 2 Russian bears, \$100; 3 striped hyenas, \$300; 1 Black bear, \$50; 1 tapir, \$200; 2 llamas, \$300; 2 blesboks, \$150; 1 wa-

terbuck, \$150; 1 male gnu, \$250; 3 leopards, \$450; 2 Sambar deer, \$100; 2 axis deer, \$100; and 2 fallow deer, \$100."

The inventory also listed 150 horses, \$10 each, \$1,500; 150 horses, various values \$50 to \$250, \$18,000; and 16 ponies \$40 each, \$640.

The show moved out for a long run for the opening stand in Vincennes, Indiana on April 26 where *Billboard* reporter Will J. Farley provided this review of the opening in the May 6 issue: "The inauguration of the Great Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. show at Vincennes, Indiana on Wednesday, April 26, occurred under the most propitious conditions. Ideal weather prevailed, and the opening performances were given without any serious mishap to mar the

pleasure of the attending audiences or cause the promoter of this show the slightest anxiety. The sun was out strong and the fan boys disposed of their wares early in the afternoon.

"Before giving a description of this circus, I must pause long enough to congratulate Mr. Al Ringling upon his most excellent enterprise. The harmonious spirit of fraternity, the atmosphere of hospitality which prevails around this show and the precision with which each department does its work, bespeaks in eloquent terms of the aggressive ability and perfect control with which this show is managed. The clock-work movement with which this show is carried on, indicates to the most casual observer that behind this mighty enterprise there is one whose patience and stamina is inexhaustible, and whose will is indomitable.

"In order that a clear and concise understanding of how well managed this show may be conveyed to the reader, I will begin by reporting all that I observed from the time of my arrival until leaving the grounds. Promptly at ten o'clock in the morning, the parade started from the circus grounds under the su-

pervision of William O'Dell. This gentleman should feel exceedingly happy at the complete success of the parade. Although Vincennes boasts of only a population of fifteen thousand, the streets of that city on April 26 were crowded to metropolitan proportions, and the spectators were not lacking in appreciation nor enthusiasm. All along the line of march could be heard outbursts of applause as the beautiful pageant wended its way through the streets of historic Vincennes. The first bandwagon, drawn by ten gray stallions, in which were seated the bright uniformed musicians, under the direction of John Richards, were greeted by 'ahs' and 'ohs' and prodigious hand-clapping. In all, the parade had twenty-nine wagons in addition to many other features.

"The line-up as it appeared, follows: Richard's band of thirty-five pieces, followed by five wagons of varied decorations and color. Roy D. Haver's band, the members of which were clad in orange-colored costumes, with helmets of the same line, followed. Next came three wagons followed by the tableaux wagons, the first of which represents the far North in winter. On this wagon is painted in gold the likenesses of the Northern reindeer. The driver wears a typical Russian costume, and the wagon was drawn by twenty Shetland ponies. Two Roman chariots followed next. Wagon No. 14 contained James Wolfscale, with his colored musicians, costumed in garments of yellow and green. This was followed by three more wagons, and then came eighteen female couriers, in costumes of red and black, trimmed in silver. The next visual delight was three magnificent animal wagons, which were closely followed by the clown band led by Fred Walton. The laughter created by this ensemble of mimics well-nigh drowned the music.

"Next came the den of lions, roaring at the top of their voices, as if desiring to participate in the general acclamation of applause. Five more wagons, followed by a tableau representing Egypt, and drawn by eight camels in full harness, were followed by two more cages of animals, directly in front of Charles Menthenthall's band of twelve pieces. The musicians in this band were clad in canary-colored uniforms. Eighteen male couriers on horseback, in yellow and black costumes, preceded three wagons, which were brought up in the rear by a herd of fourteen elephants, and the callopie, the keyboard of which is presided over by Prof. Joe Gifford. The last conveyance, although it disseminated that indescribable music which can only be



drawn from a calliope was the only unpopular wagon in the parade and it was unpopular only because it told that the end had arrived.

"Although the streets of Vincennes are narrow and not of the best construction, the parade moved on smoothly without a single stop, not a single open space which sometimes mars otherwise beautiful parade could be seen at any time along the route.

"Returning to the show grounds, where stood the white city of canvas constructed by Thomson and Vandiver, of Cincinnati, a thrill of delight passed through the visitors when the announcement came forth that the free act would next be given. This feature proved to be Miss Nellie Kimball in her cloud swing, a very beautiful picture. The band coruscating scintillating harmony, now announced that the side show was open for business. Soon after the red and white wagons, in charge of Harry Moore and W. D. Neff, were then opened, and the crowd began wending its way toward the big top. A rush was made for admission tickets, which were sold at the usual prices. John Sheehy takes tickets on the main door of the big top.

"Once inside the tent, the crowds amuse themselves in inspecting a menagerie, complete in its assortment and excellent in variety. Before entering the arena tent, let me pause again to congratulate Charles Bell upon the attractiveness of his candy stand. His pink lemonade has the real circus color and flavor, and none of the 'Cy Perkins' or 'Little Willies' could pass it by.

"The main top is one hundred and sixty five feet, with five fifty foot pieces, and has a seating capacity of seventy-five hundred. Before the circus began, Prof. Richards kept the crowd in good humor with his band, playing popular airs. After each selection, considerable applause was given. The appearance of Thomas E. Murray on the scene, dressed in a full cream flannel shirt, announced that the show was about to begin. William O'Dell blew his whistle, and the grand introductory pageant commenced.

"The program continues as follows: Display No. 1. The grand tournament of historical characters, correctly costumed, representing all the countries of the earth.

"Display No. 2. Showing three groups: of trained elephants, in the hands of Oscar Voght. George Denman and Richard Smith. In the center ring. Mr. Denman deserves special mention for two features. One elephant, carrying a collie dog in his mouth like a

mother would carry a baby, and the other, the new feat, of an elephant juggling dumbbells.

"Display No. 3. A series of mid-air comedy bar acts on stages Nos. 1 and 2, performed by the Ellet Trio and the Three Alvos.

"Display No. 4. Group of equestriennes in rings 1, 2 and 3. performed by Miss Marietta Correias, Miss Edith Castello and Miss Carrie Rooney.

"Here the clowns broke loose for their first series of antics. Among them are: W. E. Donahugh, George Inman, Andy McGrane, Billy Crawford, Morris Davis, Earl Bannard, Minert Deorlo, Bobby Reed, Ed. Walton, Walter Scott, Bert Leo, Phil E. Keeler, George Jenniers, Felix Ortaney, Gramalda Ortaney, Harry Bayfield, Paul Jones, Bert Sutton, Ray Worth, George Sears, George Gifford, Adolph, Monstier, Jack Barnell, Ed Murray, Sig. Frisco, Ed. Schmidt, Ed. Grinaldi, Signor Gamez, Denny Ryan and Fred Irish.

"Display No. 5. On stages 1 and 2, Captain Webb's trained seals, handled by Capt. Webb and Fred Huling.

"Display No. 6. (Ring No. 1) Three Sisters Ortaney, equilibrists; Ya-Mak-Tas Japs, in muscular strength; (Ring No. 2) The Great Arnesens, in feats of balancing; (Ring No. 3) Hines-Kimball Troupe, acrobats; (Stage No. 1) Riva-Larsen Troupe, in feats of strength; (Stage No. 2), Two Franks, in hand balancing.

"Display No. 7. Trained horses, ponies, dogs and monkeys, exhibited by Ed. Rooney, (Ring No. 1); Dan Curtis, (Ring No. 2); Charles Rooney, (Ring No. 3); Two Ortaneys (Stage No. 1); Prof. Taylor (Stage No. 2).

"Display No. 8. (Ring No. 1) Hines Duo, ladder balancing; (Ring No. 2) Hyataki and Ukichi, vibrating bamboo perch; (Ring No. 3) Five Alpines, acrobatics on Roman ladder; (Stage No. 1) Mme. Ortaney, riding globe; (Stage No. 2) Madame N. Hines, rolling globe.

"Display No. 9. (Ring No. 1) Charles Rooney,



This Forepaugh-Sells tableau cage was sold to John Garrett for his 1913 Rice Bros. Circus.

equestrian act; (Ring No. 2) John Rooney, bareback riding; (Ring No. 3) John Correias, equestrian act.

Display No. 10. (Ring No. 1) The Great Inman, twisting exploits; Hyataki and Conkichi, Japanese posturing; Mr. and Mrs. Patt, Roman Rings; (Ring No. 2) Riva Larson Troupe, swinging ropes; (Ring No. 3) Taw and Ukichi, equilibrists; Fred Lasere, contortionist; (Stage No. 1) Raschetta Bros., barrel jumpers; (Stage No. 2) Joe LaFleur high somersaults.

"Display No. 11. Another outbreak of clowns.

"Display No. 12. (Ring No. 1) Three Ty-Bell Sisters, wire act; (Ring No. 2) Alpine Family, wire act; (Ring No. 3) Three Ortaney Sisters, wire act; (Stage No. 1) The Wombatts, flying trapeze; (Stage No. 2) Richards Sisters, high trapeze.

"Display No. 13. (Ring No. 1) Mr. and Mrs. Dan Curtis, menage act; (Ring No. 2) Misses Lula Stephens and S. Bennett, high school act; (Ring No. 3) Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Elson, high school act; (Stage No. 1) Kakuria, top

Elephants being unloaded from a Forepaugh-Sells stock car.





spinning; Jamaktas, balancing act; (Stage No. 2) Laundere Bros., statue posing.

"Display No. 14. (Ring No. 1) Aerial La Fayettes, double trapeze; Ed. Rooney, aerial gymnast; (Ring No. 2) Kimball Sisters, double trapeze; Fred Lasure, aerial contortionist; (Ring No. 3) Two Franks, aerial trapeze; Aerial Patts, trapeze.

"Display No. 15. (Ring No. 1), Mr. John Correias and Miss M. Correias, double jockey act; (Ring No. 2) Riding Rooneys, cart riding act; (Ring No. 3) Dave Costello and Edith Costello, equestrienne feats; (Stages Nos. 1 and 2) clowns.

"Display No. 16. (Ring No. 1) Soaring Richard Sisters, mid-air teeth exhibitions; (Ring No. 2) Ty-Bell Sisters, mid-air teeth exhibitions; (Ring No. 3) Minerva Sisters, mid-air teeth exhibitions.

"Display No. 17. Hippodrome Races, ten events.

"Display No. 18. Aerial double somersault automobile by Mlle. Marie Petard.

"The show now is complete, all but the concert which consists of Thomas E. Murray's Minstrels.

"In conclusion, we must add that a more entertaining exhibition of skill and beauty has seldom been seen before in one aggregation. It might be said that success for this circus is assured.

"Before closing this pleasant task of praise, we must not forget the cook house, which is conducted by Charles W. Bower, with Claude Hinkley in charge of the commissary department. They have splendid equipment, and form a most important part of the show's success.

"The staff this year is as follows: John Sheehy, press representative, back with show; W. D. Neff, treasurer; Oscar L. Gust, auditor; Harry Moore, assistant treasurer; Charles Bell, candy butcher; Fred Warrell, legal adjuster; John Brice, chief of detectives; Al Mastiff, manager side show and announcer; William Chambers, boss animal man; George Denman, charge or elephants; Slivers Holland, boss canvasman; Joe Miller, property man; Bill Howard, boss inside ticket seller.

"It was reported in Vincennes that Clarence George, ticket taker on the front door, has been in this city since February 16, waiting for the show to arrive.

"John H. Brice (the star kid), very much in evidence everywhere, at one time it seemed.

"Henry Welsh, the boss hostler, is looking fine, and so is his stock.

"Old Preacher Miller, better known

as Joe Dan seems to be one of the most contented men with the troupe. There is not a new man in the crew.

"Albert Goete is the train master this season. There will not be any worry about him getting the show out on time, as he is one of the best in the business.

"Jimmy Fleming, who has charge of the sleeping cars, is all smiles over the appearance of the cars, and promises to keep them looking as well all season. Each car is practically new.

"One of the most pleased men about the show is Henry Welsh, the boss hostler. Mr. Welsh has done wonders in bringing out the animals, and everyone is in the best condition.

"While trying out the apparatus used in giving the automobile thriller, a heavy spring broke the night before the opening, and this feature of the performance had to be eliminated. A telegram for a new spring was sent to Cincinnati but it did not arrive in time for the show. It will be in working order at the next stop.

"John Sheedy says that Vincennes is the best town ever. He was highly entertained by the press of the city, and they in turn made everyone else want to make him a personal friend.

"W. D. Neff, treasurer of the show, is handling receipts today for the first time in many weeks. Since the close of the show last year all has been going out and nothing coming in. The amount paid out in this city by Neff the past week was much greater than generally supposed.

"The Alpine Family are one of the big features with the show. Their wardrobe and skill is marvelous, and worth the price of admission.

"One of Mr. Taylor's dogs was hurt so bad during the matinee performance that he was not able to put him through his act in the evening.

"Al Ringling was all smiles. The smoothness of the first performance was even beyond his expectations.

"It is remarkable how so many wire acts of the same quality could get into one show. Display No. 12 is exquisite in its beauty of costuming and skill in performance. The Alpine Family, Ty-Bell Sisters and Richards Sisters can not possibly be beaten."

The daily income and expense ledger, now in the Pfening Archives, provide these amounts. The gross income for the opening stand was \$4,335.69, consisting of: night

big show tickets, \$1,325.74; afternoon big show tickets, \$1,269.25; concert tickets, \$50.20; side show, \$273.30; reserve seats, \$341.25; grandstand, \$836.50; candy stands, \$239.45. The expenses for the day were \$3,769.04, which included the rail transportation cost.

The show next played Evansville, Owensboro and Louisville, Kentucky and then made a Sunday run to its old home town of Columbus, Ohio. Opposition was hot and heavy in Ohio's capital city. The John Robinson show had opened the season there on April 27. The Young Buffalo Wild West was scheduled for May 17 and the Barnum & Bailey show May 22. The show grossed \$4,737.92 including \$515.60 for the side show in Columbus. Columbus was the only city played by both the Barnum and Forepaugh-Sells shows.

The June 10 *Billboard* carried these notes on the show: "Marie Petrot, the little French girl who does the mid-air 'joy-ride,' shattering the atmosphere with her automobile. twice a day rain or shine is something of a wit. Recently, I stood near when she lit upon the padded platform--and she did light! Jumping out of the machine, she said: 'Wouldn't zat jar you!' I agreed that it did, and broke my watch crys-

The Riding Rooneys, John, Carrie and Charles on Forepaugh-Sells in 1911.







tal at the same time. Some dash--that automobile somersaulting stunt.

"Ever see Treasurer Neff deliver a statement to the 'Boss.' As sensational as Joe LaFleur's backward dive--only, 'Duff' uses chairs. W. D. Neff has the treasurer's job this season, and everybody is happy.

"Albert Mastiff is the official announcer, and is in charge of affairs de la side show.

"Billy O'Dell, as debonair as ever, blows the whistle, and wears becoming duds.

"Contracting press agent Arthur E. Diggs says he likes the work all right, if it wasn't the rates the business managers try to put over, and the number of tickets they demand. Cheer up--Arthur, you haven't contracted Dallas, Texas.

"A newspaper man asked me the other day if Adam Forepaugh was with the show much--I said--'Not much'--and this chap was attached to the bureau of information of a Pittsburgh newspaper.

"How good twenty-four-hour men are to each other. S. Beckett switched with Harry Curtis in making Elmira, because the latter is a native of that burg.

"Poor Alice! How the Associated Press did hurl fibs about your demise over the country. Maybe you did die of

This enormous bill stand was posted in opposition to three other circuses playing Columbus, Ohio in the spring of 1911. Circus World Museum collection.

a broken heart as giraffes sometimes do, but head animal keeper Starr told me on the quilt, that it was high living that did the trick. I do not know where your carcass went, but the 'Boss' gave your freckled hide to 'Chick' Bell--and he tells me it will be converted into a rug for his home in the 'Capitol City of the World.'

"Ty-Bell Sisters have a full new line of costumes this season--and no one has anything on the Alpine--Minerva--or Richards Sisters--the prettiest bevy or circus girls on tour.

"George Denman has taught the famous Forepaugh Dancing Elephants and a set of Collie dogs, many new tricks, which, in conjunction with two other big elephant acts, is making a great hit.

"The Riding Rooneys have added many daring new features to their superior riding act. Charlie Rooney, brother of John, is now working with them.

"Conductor John J. Richards, who wields the baton in directing the excellent band that is rendering a fine musical program prior to the big show performance looks a picture in his various make-ups. John has a different uniform for each day in the week.

"Marrietta Correia, Carrie Rooney and Edith Castello are a trio of very attractive bareback riders.

"The clown who does the 'Salome' dance with clarinet obbligato by another clown--(I have not learned the names of either yet)--to the air of *Every Little Movement*, from Madame Sherry, are mighty funny Joeys. Look out boys--you'd better copyright that stunt, or the clowns with other circuses will be copying it before long.

"It is worth a trip to the Forepaugh-Sells show, just to see and hear Tom Murray direct the people to their seats. Tom sure does wear good clothes.

"Versatile John G. Sheehy has mastered a lecture on zoology, describing the many rare and wild beasts from numerous climes. John entertains the press back with the show and is an entertainer.

"Edward Rooney is also with the Forepaugh-Sells Bros. show this season. He does not work with the Riding Rooney act, however.

"Number 3 car manager, C. W. Finney, not only wears a happy smile, but a pair of corn-colored gloves, too--natty chap, that car manager.

"Traffic manager Charles Wilson was on to the show in Pittsburgh--so were the Pennsylvania R. R. officials.

"They say that Tom Dransfield, manager or No. 2 car, is taking on flesh rapidly, and can scarcely get through the car door--nothing wrong with the contract hotels eh, Tom

"The Dancing Elephants had company in Columbus--the quarter poles danced with them.

A curious report appeared in the May 20 New York *Clipper*: "It is rumored that the entire outfit of the Forepaugh-Sells Circus will be sold at auction at the close of the present season. Next year will find the show one of the best equipped organizations of its kind on the road, as the Ringlings are considering entirely rebuilding it and possibly opening in New York."

The troupe went into Pennsylvania at Allegheny on May 5, where the gross income was \$5,932.35. By May 13 it was in Dunkirk, New York. Binghamton was played on May 27 where the gross was \$7,485.81. A Sunday run took the show to Carbondale, Pennsylvania on May 29. Small towns like Bloomsburg, Milton, Mt. Carmel, Pottsville, and Morristown were shown in the Keystone State. On June 9 the show was in Dover, New Jersey.

By June 21 the show had turned west and was in Martinsburg, West Virginia. The show then played six stands in Ohio and was in Ardrian,



Michigan on July 3. At Cheboygan, Michigan on July 11 both performances were lost, but the side show and candy stands did \$194.00. In all, twenty-two stands were played in Michigan. Joliet, Illinois was played July, 29; Grinnell, Iowa, August 1; and South Omaha, Nebraska on August 3.

Throughout the season the show ran into small problems with city officials. A July 23, 1911 letter to the show from advance car No. 2 manager Tom Dransfield tells of one incident: "In expense book #15 you will notice where I paid a twenty-five dollar fine for my man being arrested in Council Bluffs for posting bills without a license, as the city billposter had him arrested. The fine for posting bills in Council Bluffs, [per the statute] reads not less than twenty-five dollars and not over one hundred.

"My billposter's name is J. P. Schallcross. I gave twenty-five dollars bond for his appearance in court and I forfeited same, as the fine might have been more."

The show lost the day in Phillipsburg, Kansas on August 5 on account of high water. McCook, Nebraska was billed on August 4 for the 5th. When the show arrived in McCook about 7:30 p.m. it was unable to unload because the wagons faced the wrong way on the flat cars and facilities for turning the train around were not available in the limited time. The show moved on to Pueblo, Colorado on Sunday. On August 7 in Pueblo it grossed \$5,322.65. Denver was shown on August 9 where it grossed \$8,247.00, the best day of the season to date.

After Ft. Collins and Greeley, Colorado the show turned back east and was in Kearney, Nebraska on August 14. Moving quickly through Iowa the show entered Wisconsin at Richland Center on August 25 and played Beloit the next day where it grossed \$4,232.95.

The show played Burlington, Wisconsin on August 29. The Burlington paper published this afternotice on September 1: "Tuesday was circus day in Burlington. Thousands of people, came early, stayed late, and enjoyed themselves in true American style.


"The occasion was the visit of Forepaugh and Sells Bros. circus, the largest, and it proved to be the best, circus that has ever visited Burlington.

"To many the unloading of the circus proved an attraction, and several hundred people assembled at the C. M. & St. P. depot as early as four o'clock that morning to witness the feature of the work. But the early birds had a

# C., M. & ST. P. R'Y EXCURSIONS


## THE GREAT ADAM FOREPAUGH AND SELLS BROS. BIG UNITED SHOWS

THE LAST AND GREATEST THRILLER  
THE WILDEST "JOY RIDE" EVER INDULGED IN



THE DAZZLING TRAMP AUTOMOBILE  
DOUBLE FORWARD SOMERSAULT

### AMERICA'S GREATEST CIRCUS



Gorgeous, New, Free Street Parade At 10 o'clock A.M.

The Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway  
WILL SELL ROUND-Trip TICKETS TO THE  
**ADAM FOREPAUGH & SELLS BROS.**  
BIG UNITED SHOWS  
To OWATONNA and RETURN

STATION	RATE
Raymond	\$1.00
Gaylord	1.50
Brownsdale	1.40
Dexter	1.75
Grand Meadow	2.00
Washington	1.75
Bombay	1.55
Kellogg	1.55
Causton Falls	1.75
Handolph	1.55
Worthington	1.80
Dundas	1.05
Faribault	.85
Medford	.85

Trains leaving before 10:00 A.M. will be to stop at Owatonna the  
**GRAND FREE STREET PARADE**

WILL EXHIBIT AT  
**OWATONNA**  
— ON —  
**Tuesday,  
SEPT. 5**  
Afternoon and Night

Excursion herald used in Owatonna, Minnesota in 1911.

wait, as it was not until after six o'clock that the first train carrying the horses, tents, etc, pulled into Burlington. The first wagon to be unloaded was a heavy canvas wagon and it went into the soft ground in the freight yards up to the hubs. Eighteen huge draft horses were hitched to it to pull it out. The second train, carrying the menagerie animals, big tent equipment, and actors, arrived shortly before seven o'clock.

"Some 300 head of horses were immediately put to work hauling the equipment to the Ball property on West Geneva Street, where the circus was held. Here, as if by magic, a huge city of tents arose in practically no time. Civil engineers platted out the lot, set markers for stakes, a pile driver run by a gasoline engine drives the stakes, horses

pull up the tents, and everywhere is 'system.' Each man knows just what part of the work he has to do and the numerous tents are put up in an amazingly short time.

"People from far and near commenced congregating on the down town streets as early as eight o'clock and by ten the streets were crowded. It was nearly 10:30 when the first notes of the band announced the parade was coming. And it was a parade, the likes of which has never been seen in Burlington. Five bands furnished music; the clowns, the fun; the animals, the thrills; and the hundreds of handsome grey horses brought forth many words of praise.

"Dinner proved a serious problem to many. The hotels and restaurants were crowded to capacity, and many were satisfied with a hamburger or red hot from the corner vendors.

"At one o'clock the migration to the circus grounds started and by two o'clock it is estimated that over 5,000 people were in the tents. Practically every seat in the big tent was filled, the circus authorities expressing surprise at such a crowd from so small a town. And all were there to enjoy themselves.

"The circus came up to every expectation, and as one of our farmer friends expressed it: 'They came nearer doing everything than any circus I ever saw.' Their acts were all good, from the comic antics of the clowns, through the stunts of the trained animals, the bareback riding, the acrobatic acts of Japs, etc., to the young lady turning the somersault in the automobile, flying trapeze acts, turning and tumbling, wire walking, barrel jumping and high backward dives furnished plenty of thrills.

"The menagerie proved an interesting feature, there being many strange and odd animals on exhibition.

"The crowd at the evening performance was estimated at 4,000 and it was the same kind of good natured crowd that attended in the afternoon. All went home satisfied with the circus and loud in their praise for the clean, orderly manner in which everything was conducted." The gross in Burlington was \$3,480.65.

The show played Monroe, Wisconsin on August 30. The Monroe *Daily Journal* published this article that day: "There were a lot of early risers in town this morning. The attraction was the arrival of the Adam Forepaugh-Sells Bros. circus from Burlington and the unloading of the cars, the transfer of the wild animals and the immense



quantity of paraphernalia to the fair grounds and the erection of the huge tents there.

"The parade was one of the finest and largest ever witnessed here. The improvements told a wonderful tale of enterprise. In other places where the circus has exhibited this season the unanimous verdict is that the Forepaugh & Sells Bros. circus from start to finish is in every sense the best on the road.

"Here in a nut shell are the salient features of the splendid performance: The marvelous aerial act of the 'Human Butterflies,' the Ty-Bell Sisters, a gorgeous and costly European importation; remarkable performance of two men and a superior troupe of trained seals; the best trained elephants in the world; the funniest company of European clowns ever seen; a complete and startling circus of aerial features; the best riders on earth—among them the famous Rooneys and Correias; the greatest of the earth's acrobats, principally the Alpine company; the Hines-Kimball troupe and Raschettas brothers.

"The following from an outside newspaper tells the story: 'Two hours and a half of solid pleasure was given those who attended the Forepaugh & Sells Bros. show yesterday afternoon, or last night. It was not only the biggest show that has pitched its tent here for several years past, but the best. The attendance at the afternoon performance was large. In fact, it was beyond expectations of the management. In the evening the big tent was filled to its capacity. Country folks in large numbers came into town early in the day, and the lines and trains brought many more. It was a gala day for the small boy, and his little sister, too, for that matter. Venders of circus lemonade did a big business and circus peanuts found a ready sale.' The show grossed \$3,362.60 in Monroe.

By September John and Charles Ringling had decided not to tour Forepaugh-Sells in 1912. On September 25 John sent the following telegram, now in the Pfening Archives, from Chicago to Charles on the Ringling show in Tucson, Arizona: "I visited the Forepaugh show Saturday and Al agreed to close Forepaugh, so I consider that settled. We can divide practically all (contracted) Forepaugh acts between Barnum and Ringling. Wire me as soon as possible which Forepaugh acts will be available for Barnum."

The month of September was spent wandering through Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois.

Then came Kentucky: Paducah on



A number of parade wagons from Forepaugh-Sells became part of the Ringling march in 1912. Two are shown here.

September 27 and Hopkinsville on the 28th. From there the route hop-scotched in and out of Tennessee and Alabama, returning to Kentucky at Bowling Green on October 6 where there was a gross of \$6,753.22.

The circus headed back south, playing Chattanooga and into Georgia at Rome on October 11. After ten stands in Georgia came Jacksonville, Florida on October 21 for the second best day of the season. The gross income there was \$9,305.89. A Sunday run took it to Tampa for the biggest stand of the season with a gross of \$10,372.85.

Significantly, this marked the first time the Ringlings had ever sent one of their circuses down into the Florida peninsula. Turning around at Tampa, Forepaugh-Sells started back north and, on the way out of the Sunshine State, made stands at Ocala, Gainesville and Live Oak.

The final days of the 1911 tour took Forepaugh-Sells through Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. The closing stand was in Water Valley, Mississippi on November 11.

The November 1, 1911 New York *Clipper* printed its last report on the show: "The Forepaugh-Sells Circus, one of the many shows controlled by the Ringling Bros., will be sold at auction. The reason for selling is a mystery, as the show has always made money. Reports say that the tour just ended was the best in its history."

The November 18 *Billboard* reported: "Contracts that had been made earlier in the season by the Ringling brothers for people to be with the Forepaugh-Sells shows next season, have been called in, as it is authoritatively reported that that show will not be out

next season. The property will be sold but the title will remain with Ringling." This indicates that at some point it was planned to tour the show in 1912.

The December 30 *Billboard* reported: "Show circles were stirred this week by the rumor that Fred Buchanan, owner of the Yankee Robinson Circus, had purchased ten carloads of equipment of the Forepaugh-Sells Circus from the Ringlings. Knowing ones, compiling this report with the avowal of the Sells-Floto people to invade the East next summer, thought they saw therein, the winding-up of the season of the historical circus.

"John Ringling who passed through Chicago yesterday on his way to Florida was asked to substantiate the rumors. Pleading lack of time, he referred his interviewer to Charles Ringling at the Palmer House. Mr. Peckham, speaking for the latter gentleman, confirmed the report recently printed in the *Billboard* that the Forepaugh-Sells Circus would not go out next season, but denied that the sale indicated anything other than the disposal of some surplus equipment. He said that the show will be kept intact, and will go on the road when conditions are again propitious. He dismissed as unworthy of discussion, any rumors relating to an understanding with the Sells-Floto interests."

The total income for the season was \$677,251.91. The total expenses were \$551,362.79. Among the higher expenses were: performers payroll, \$87,869.86; workingmen payroll, \$60,162.79; agents, \$39,996.66; rail transportation, \$72,798.15; printing and advertising, \$55,907.17; dining tent expenses, \$47,424.19; licence and police, \$18,056.00; and straw, hay and grain, \$33,605.38.



The Ringlings had no plans for again touring the Forepaugh-Sells show and began selling the excess equipment and animals.

On November 18 Abe Klee & Son, the big horse dealers, bought seventy baggage horses, thirty ring stock horses and a dozen ponies for \$11,300.00.

Fred Buchanan contacted the Ringlings about buying some of the Forepaugh-Sells equipment. The Ringlings quoted him:

"Flat cars No. 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55, \$350 each.

"Stock cars No. 18, 19, 20 and 21, \$350 each.

"Advertising car No. 2, \$900.

"Advertising car No. 3, \$1,400.

"Elephant cars No. 26 and 27, \$400 each; and No. 28, \$250.

"Sleeper No. 60, \$600.

"Sleeper No. 61, \$750.

"Tableau wagon No. 2, \$400.

"Tableau No. 6, \$400.

"Cage, for two or six horses, \$300.

"Large cage, for two or six horses, \$350.

"Sells [Forepaugh-Sells] Lion band chariot, \$400.

"Eight horse Garland Entry group, \$1,200."

Some prices quoted to Buchanan were lower than when listed on the sale list; others were higher. It is thought that the items marked "sold" were bought by Buchanan for his Yankee Robinson. The sale of this equipment probably started the rumor printed in *Billboard* that Buchanan had bought some Forepaugh-Sells equipment.

On January 26, 1912 Buchanan bought stock cars No. 18, 19, 22. Sleeper No. 61 and the No. 2 advance car.

A sale list, a number of copies of which survive, was published on January 10, 1912: "Elephant Nellie, \$1,500 (sold); elephant Jennie L., \$1,500 (sold); elephant Lena, \$1,100; elephant Lou, \$1,500; elephant Rubber, \$1,200; three camels; two \$100 each and one \$150; a Water Buffalo, \$60; five zebras, two \$250 each, two \$300 each, one \$300; four Sacred Ox, three \$50 each, one, a breeder, \$40; one Horned horse, \$350; and various cage animals.

"Eight black horse garland entry, as presented in center ring of Ringling show, \$1,200. Eight cream horse garland entry, \$1,800. Sultan and Mahomet, stallions, do liberty act, \$1,000. Wolf, gray stallion, \$400.

"Advertising car No. 2, Interior arrangements complete, with steam paste making outfit, paper lockers, berths for bill posters, office with

desk, equipped with steel wheels, \$900 (sold).

"Advertising car No. 3 Equipped same as No. 2, 61 feet long, \$1,200. Sleeping car No. 60. One end fitted for working people three high, one end fitted for bosses two high, \$600. Sleeping car No. 61 berths throughout three high for working people. will sleep 96 as it is, could be made to sleep 102 people. Has toilet, wash bowls, and water tanks, \$700. Sleeping car No. 62, \$500. Sleeping car No. 63, \$400. Private car No. 67, fine condition, bath room, drawing room, kitchen, dining room and state rooms, fully equipped, \$3,000.

"Stock car No. 18, 50 feet, \$350 (sold). Stock car No. 19 50 feet, \$350 (sold). Stock car No. 20 60 feet, \$400. Stock car No. 21 50 feet, \$350. Stock car No. 22, 50 feet, \$300 (sold).

"Elephant car No. 26, 50 feet, \$400. Elephant car No. 27 50 feet, \$300. Elephant car No. 28 45 feet, \$250.

"Flat car No. 30, 60 feet, \$400. Flat car No. 31, 52 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 32, 52 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 33, 54 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 34, 50 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 35, 54 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 36, 52 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 37, 52 feet, \$350. Flat car No. 38, 60 feet, \$400. Flat car No. 40, 50 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 42, 53 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 43, 50

Newspaper advertisement used in Griffin, Georgia near the end of the 1911 season. Pfening Archives.

feet, \$300. Flat car No. 44, 50 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 45, 50 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 46, 50 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 47, 50 feet, \$250. Flat car No. 49, 52 feet, \$300. Flat car No. 50, 50 feet, \$200. Flat car No. 51, 60 feet, \$250. Flat car No. 52, 50 feet, \$200. Flat car No. 53, 50 feet, \$200. Flat car No. 54, 60 feet, \$250. Flat car No. 55, 50 feet, \$200."

Fifty-five wagons and cages were listed ranging in price from \$5 to \$250 each. Among parade vehicles was the Forepaugh-Sells calliope for \$400.00, the former Ringling Sea Horse tableau No. 2 for \$400.00, and the Forepaugh-Sells Angel tableau for \$400.00.

The seating was also peddled: "55 lengths of blue seats, 14 tier (no plank), \$750; 14 lengths grand stand, 10 tier, 2 extra, in all 12 tier, \$750; 14 lengths reserve seats, 12 tier, 1 extra, in all 13 tier, \$750; 25 lengths red extra seats, 7 tier (no plank), \$100; 43 new reserve seat stringers, 10 tier, \$120.

"Three ring curbs \$50 each."

All of the show was not listed, and at least one non-Forepaugh-Sells wagon was on the list, "large tableau wagon carrying a set of big chime bells such as are used in cathedrals and churches, wagon heavily carved, bells to be played by one man, \$700." This was the Ringling bell wagon; and, luckily for Ringling-Barnum plans in the distant future this famous wagon was not sold.

On January 26 Tom Wiedemann, owner of the Kit Carson wild west show, bought the elephants Rubber, Lena, and Lou. He also bought the steam calliope, elephant car No. 26, and flat car No. 30. The calliope was lost in a wreck a few weeks after the Carson show opened, but fortunately not before the photograph of it was taken which appeared in Part One of this article.

On January 31 three zebras and shipping crates were sold to William P. Hall for \$865.

On February 1, 150 sets of harness were sold to A. Klee & Son for \$1,125. The same day Andrew Downie of the Downie and Wheeler Circus bought stock car No. 20; cages 12, 17 and 18; and a horned yak. Downie later bought Forepaugh-Sells cage No. 56 and Ringling cottage cage No. 76, both of which were on the 1910 and 1911 Forepaugh-Sells.

The Selig Polyscope Co., a motion picture outfit, bought two female lions for \$310 on March 4. On April 1, it bought another lioness for \$50.00.

The K. G. Barkoot carnival bought

**Griffin, FRIDAY, 13**  
OCTOBER  
(1898-1911)

**\$3,200,000**  
INVESTED CAPITAL  
\$7,000 DAILY EXPENSES

**3 MILES OF**  
PARADE SQUARES  
10 ACRES OF TENTS

**FOREPAUGH AND SELLS BROS**

**BIG UNITED SHOWS**  
300 CIRCUS ARTISTS  
COLUMBIAN PLAZA, NEW YORK

The Largest Tent Ever Erected in U.S. Big Animals  
FILLED WITH CIRCUS ACTS ALL NEW AND NOVEL

**1 MILE OF RAILROAD CARS**  
750 WILD ANIMALS  
3 HERDS OF ACTING ELEPHANTS  
THE BIGGEST WILD ANIMAL

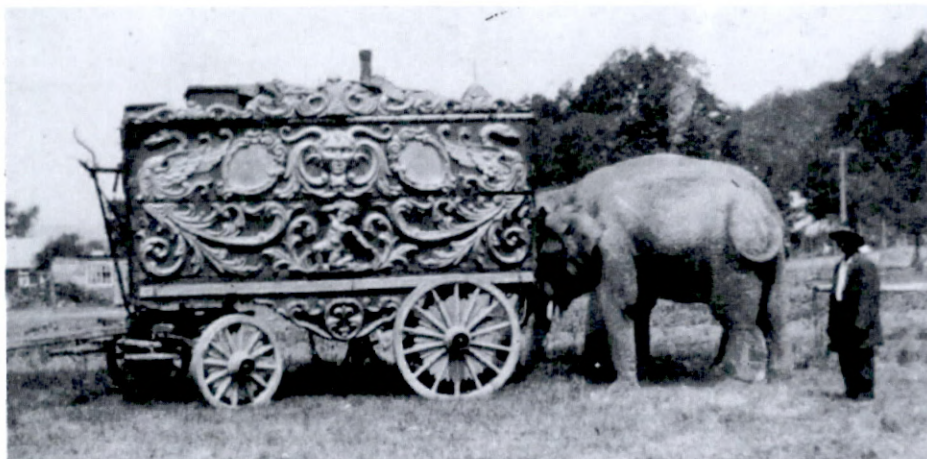
**THE AUTOMOBILE DOUBLE SOMERSAULT**  
GREATEST THRILLER OF THE AGE

**1,000 NEW CIRCUS WONDERS**  
ON ALL THE EARTH

**MENAGERIE**

AT 10 O'CLOCK EVERY MORNING  
**BIG, NEW STREET PARADE**  
See 50 Four Wheel Animals in M. Children under 12 Years Half Price  
2 Performances Daily at 2 and 7 p.m. Shows open at 1 and 7 p.m.





This tableau cage, used on the 1911 Forepaugh-Sells circus, is shown here on Downie & Wheeler in 1912.

flat cars No. 51 and 54 for \$500 on April 1, 1912.

Some of the better Forepaugh equipment was held for use on the Barnum and Ringling shows. A number of the 1911 parade wagons were used on the Ringling show in 1912 including the Five Graces bandwagon; Forepaugh-Sells tableau wagons No. 3, 4, and 7; the Forepaugh rhino den; Forepaugh-Sells cages No. 23 and 24; the Russia tableau; and three pony floats, Santa Claus, Cinderella and Old Women in Shoe.

On February 28, 1912 Charles Ringling sent this telegram from Baraboo to John in Bridgeport: "Shipment to Bridgeport will include fifty-six horses, three stock cars, three coaches, three flat cars and one advance car, total ten cars. One chair wagon eighteen feet long five chairs wide, one scenery wagon twenty six feet, one baggage wagon sixteen feet and one ticket wagon, total four wagons. If this is all the wagons

This tableau cage from Forepaugh-Sells in 1911 was sold to Fred Buchanan. It is shown here on his Yankee Robinson Circus in 1916.



you want can cut out one flat car making total of nine cars. Expect to make shipment evening of March first."

Forepaugh equipment missing from the printed sale list suggests that the shipment to Bridgeport consisted of stock cars No. 14, 15, 16; sleepers No. 64, 65, 68; flat cars No. 41, 48 (third unknown); and advance advertising car No. 1. The chair wagon was probably Forepaugh No. 68, which was new in 1910. The ticket wagon was the red one, also built in 1910.

The Moeller Wagon Company, as agent for the Ringlings, sold a number of wagons. On July 22, 1912 Moeller advised the Ringlings of the following: "Sold to Yankee Robinson show (Fred Buchanan) on June 1, 1912 the Sells Bros. [Forepaugh-Sells] Lion bandwagon, \$350; on June 11 sold to Al G. Barnes, Forepaugh-Sells cage No. 19, \$200; baggage wagon No. 31, \$200; and baggage wagon No. 65, \$200. On July 5 sold to K. G. Barkoot carnival, baggage wagon No. 13, \$100; baggage wagon No. 44, \$100; baggage wagon No. 67, \$150; baggage wagon No. 64, \$100; baggage wagon No. 42, \$100; baggage wagon No. 61, \$100." Moeller advised the Ringlings that the total of \$1,800 had been deposited in the Bank of Baraboo. Buchanan later bought a cage used on

Forepaugh-Sells in 1910-1911 which was one of the fancy tableau cages used on the 1896-1907 version of the title. It had been numbered 51 on the original Forepaugh-Sells show.

In late February 1913 John H. Garrett of Rice Bros. Circus bought two cages, two tableau wagons, and the old St. George and the Dragon float which originally sat atop the Lion and Mirror bandwagon. One of the cages was an old Ringling den numbered 68; the other was a Forepaugh-Sells tableau cage with an Indian head on the side. It had been numbered 49 on the earlier incantation of Forepaugh-Sells and was probably numbered 19 on the 1910-1911 version.

The two tabs were the old Ringling Sea Horse wagon No. 2 which started life on Burr Robbins and the Angel tab No. 6 which was one of a number of fine wagons from the earlier Forepaugh-Sells show. The Angel tableau was on the 1910-1911 revival, but there is no evidence that the Sea Horse wagon was there. The St. George pony float had been sitting around the Baraboo quarters for years, and it appears doubtful that it saw time on the 1910-1911 Forepaugh-Sells show.

In April, 1912, the Forepaugh-Sells Egyptian-flavored hippo den was shipped from Baraboo to Bridgeport carrying one of the hippos, either Fatima or August. The cage would see subsequent duty on Barnum & Bailey (for sure in 1918). Upon the merger of the Barnum and Ringling circuses, this wagon became surplus. So, on January 29, 1920 it was sold by Ringling-Barnum to Mugivan and Bowers who put it into service on their John Robinson show, presumably in 1920 and for sure in 1921 and 1922.

Nineteen hundred eleven saw the end of the famous Adam Forepaugh and Sells Bros. Big United Shows, and memories of it began to fade into the shadows of the past. Only once during the last eighty-four years has the title reappeared, in 1935. That year the Ringling organization, then under the direction of Samuel W. Gumpertz, appended it to the Ringling-owned Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus making that show's banners read "Hagenbeck-Wallace and 4 Paw-Sells Bros. Combined Circus." Even that was a half century ago!

Information for this article was provided by the Circus World Museum; Milner Library, Illinois State University; Fred Dahlinger; Richard Reynolds III; Cam McCarthy; Robert MacDougall; and the Pfening Archives.



### Author's Note

*This article is a sequel to "The St. Leons in America, Part One: The Alfred St. Leon Family," published in Bandwagon, November-December 1991. I had intended that these articles would follow each other in quicker succession than what they have but such are the responsibilities of career and parenthood.*

*Gus St. Leon was the eldest son of Mathew St. Leon (whose original name was the more prosaic John Jones), the founder of the family circus in Australia, and older brother to the aforementioned Alfred. This article outlines the activities of Gus and his family in the United States, Mexico and Central America early this century. To set everything in context, I have outlined the story of the family, before its departure for the America in 1901 and its activities in Australia immediately after its return here in 1908.*

### Introduction

The old St. Leon show enjoyed its heyday during the late 1870s and 1880s. There was hardly a city, town or village in the eastern colonies of Australia or in New Zealand that had not witnessed its huge (by Australian standards) cavalcade of "150 men and horses," 20 or more travelling vehicles, a menagerie of 12 caged wagons, the whole lot adding up to a town parade that extended more than half a mile in length. Sometimes, the show moved by rail.

In 1876, the big American show, Cooper, Bailey & Co., a railroad circus touring the major cities of the United States, shipped across the Pacific to Australia for the first of two successful tours. Gus St. Leon was at the height of his equestrian powers when James A. Bailey offered Gus the magnificent sum of 35 pounds--perhaps US \$175--a week to return to the United States with his big show. Times must have been good for the St. Leons in Australia because Gus turned him down.

The St. Leon show had grown large by 1885. It was divided in two. Gus and Alf St. Leon headed the larger show, named St. Leon's Royal Palace Circus & Menagerie of Wild Animals. Shipped to New Zealand in October that year, it began a 12 month long tour of the land of the "long white cloud." The "old man" St. Leon and his remaining son, Walter, continued touring eastern Australia with a smaller circus.

Australia's population did not reach 4 million until the turn of the century and its economy could not support

# The St. Leons in America

## The Gus St. Leon Family

By Mark St. Leon

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more than one or two large circus companies. With hindsight, the division of the St. Leon circus into two shows turned out to be an error of judgement for it let the field wide open for another Australian circus of international quality. By the late 1880s, a young, new breed of circus entrepreneurs had entered the business. The battle of the FitzGerald brothers and the Wirth brothers for the circus supremacy of Australia would only end with the deaths of the FitzGeralds, a few months apart, in 1906.

The fresh competition posed by the FitzGeralds and the Wirths, divisions within the St. Leon family, and the bankruptcy of the elder St. Leon in 1889

Gus St. Leon, Australia's premiere equestrian. All illustrations are from the author's collection unless otherwise credited.



were all symptomatic of the decline of the old St. Leon show. The St. Leon circus reverted to what it had originally been, a reliable circus of the Australian "bush" and, although all the family came together under the old man St. Leon's direction again, the alliance was brief. With advancing age, the old man St. Leon was unable to keep up the pace demanded of the life

of an itinerant showman. Meanwhile, his three sons, Gus, Walter and Alfred had expanding families of their own to support.

The closure of the Federal Bank of Australia on 28 January 1893 precipitated a banking crash. The colonies plunged into an economic depression. On 14 April 1893 the Commercial Bank of Australia surrendered operations and fourteen other banks suspended operations during the monetary crisis that followed. The ensuing colonial depression sealed the fate of the once grand St. Leon show. The St. Leon family fragmented.

The colonial depression forced the large Wirth circus to seek greener pastures. "As things were bad," recalled Philip Wirth, "we decided to try our luck in South Africa." Gus St. Leon was "instrumental" in training all the horses that the Wirths took with them.<sup>1</sup> Before sailing from Adelaide, the Wirths collected an all-Australian menagerie of wild animals that would be an instant success on their tour of South Africa. The Boers came from distances of 300 miles away to see not only the Australian circus but its menagerie of kangaroos, emus, birds of all kinds, Australian snakes and reptiles.

Gus St. Leon, with the assistance of his family, operated his own circus for a time, just a small wagon show. Gus St. Leon's Great Palace Circus opened in Mackay, Queensland on 13 May 1895.<sup>2</sup> The bill included Conny Moreny, "the great bounding jockey;" Master Cass and Daisy St. Leon "in their great double trapeze act;" the St. Leon Family Juvenile Brass Band, "4 in number;" the Aboriginal performer Alec Orlandi,<sup>3</sup> "the marvellous tumbler and contortionist;" Tommy Coleman, "the great trick rider and acrobat" together with "a host of artists too numerous to mention." Gus' daughter also appeared as "Miss Neredah, the fearless lady rider in her great hurricane hurdle act." After its winter tour of Queensland, where they could enjoy the warmer climate, the Gus St. Leon circus returned south to New South Wales.





**Tamworth**

After an overland journey of several months, Gus St. Leon's Palace Circus opened in Tamworth, a major provincial centre about 300 miles north-west of Sydney, on Saturday, 8 February 1896. The company included the "great juvenile brass band" led by "the lady clarinet player," probably an allusion to Gus' wife, Maggie, or daughter, Daisy. Alick Orlandi was still with the company, the "great African (sic) somersault turnover [who] throws double somersaults over 13 chairs clearing 25 feet." The West family and four clowns rounded out the company. On Saturday evening, 15 February, the circus gave its last performance as Gus then disbanded his show to take up the license of the Royal Oak Hotel at West Tamworth. The following Monday, the day he took possession of the Royal Oak Hotel, Gus "was presented by the members of his late circus company with an address and a gold masonic pendant as a token of the esteem in which he is held by them. Mr. St. Leon announced that he is prepared to break in ladies and gentleman's hacks and to give riding lessons. The St. Leon juvenile band which was such a feature of the now disbanded circus is open for engagement, and it is intended to take steps to form a town band, intending members of which are requested to intimate their desire to join to Mr. St. Leon or to the bandmaster, Mr. Ben Young."<sup>4</sup>

Gus and his family settled at Tamworth for two years. Although the education of his children seems to have been his motive for settling down, Gus did not relinquish any thought of retiring permanently from professional circus life.<sup>5</sup> His children kept up their musical studies at least, and their circus skills as well. "St. Leon's Band" became a popular attraction at balls, dances and parties in and around Tamworth, not to mention the local

The Gus St. Leon in Tamworth c. 1897. Left to right, Cass, Daisy, unknown man, Syl, Phil (in female dress), Gus and Reg.

racers, balls in aid of the Roman Catholic Church, and the local quadrille club. Their "music, [was] with trifling exceptions excellent" and the local people appreciated their efforts.<sup>6</sup>

"A most pleasant and enjoyable function was the ball given by the Jubilee Quadrille Club on Wednesday evening as the fitting means of winding up their series of winter socials. There was a good attendance on the floor and dancing was kept up to the strains of St. Leon's band until an early hour on the following morning."<sup>7</sup>

When the old man St. Leon, by then in partnership with the West family, turned up in Tamworth with his circus late the following December, Gus' family came over to lend a hand in the performance given on the vacant allotment adjoining the Caledonian Hotel. Gus and Daisy went through their equestrian exercises in the ring, while Gus' boys performed in the band.

Gus' beloved wife, Maggie, died at the Royal Oak Hotel, Tamworth on 27 January 1898, aged 40 years. "Cerebral softening" explained her death certificate. She had been suffering for four months. The following day she was buried in the Roman Catholic portion of Tamworth cemetery. Within a few weeks of Maggie's death, Gus sold the license of the Royal Oak. Gus and his children departed Tamworth, the scene of their loss, to seek a happy engagement with a circus company. They left many friends behind in Tamworth.

#### **FitzGerald's Circus**

We lose track of the activities of Gus and his family for about six months. They may have travelled with a smaller circus troupe or settled down somewhere to get their circus skills back in shape after two years away from circus

life. By August 1898, they joined the circus of the American showman, Ellsworth L. Probasco, as it travelled New South Wales. Gus' musical children probably complemented Probasco's band but Gus and Daisy both performed as equestrians in the circus ring, Gus doing his splendid riding and Daisy her perfect vaulting over fire bars.

Probasco's Circus headed south into the colony of Victoria. It played opposition to FitzGerald's Circus during the 1898 Melbourne Cup season. Gus and his family transferred their professional services to the bigger, and possibly better paying, FitzGerald show. They remained with FitzGerald's for nearly two years, sporting imported pretensions under the name of Gus Rizzio & Family. The "St. Leon" name too well known to the Australian public to be recycled.

In FitzGerald's Circus, Gus and Daisy did equestrian work in the ring. The boys, Cass, Syl and Reg, performed in the circus band, conducted by a fine German bandmaster, Von Der Mehden who tutored Cass, Syl and Reg in music. Every evening, the band played in front of the circus tent an hour before the show, from seven until eight o'clock. After this open air concert was over, they would take part in the ring show but pop in to play a tune with the band in between acts if there was time.<sup>8</sup>

Together, Gus and Daisy performed *The Olympians*, a graceful act on two fine horses. Individually, Gus did a five-horse "picture" act while Daisy gave an intrepid display of bareback riding on her horse, *Talleyrand*, that required her to dive fearlessly through hoops of fire.

On 25 March 1899, FitzGerald's opened in Sydney for its customary Easter season. The FitzGerald's had established a more or less standard route for their annual Australian tour. After the demise of FitzGerald's Circus in the early 1900s, the Wirths adopted the route along with other customs of the FitzGerald's. This route was a circuit of the major Australian cities during the warmer months that coincided with annual agricultural shows or cup festivals. Tours of Western Australia and Queensland, both warmer climates, took place during the winter months.

#### **Louisa**

In Sydney on 9 May 1899, Gus married a widow, Louisa Wirth, the widow of John Wirth.<sup>9</sup> Louisa was born at Hillgrove in the New England district of New South Wales. A very kind and loving woman, Louisa reared the



young Adrian, Gus' youngest son.<sup>10</sup> She never had any children of her own but she did have two adopted children, adopted by her and her first husband, John Wirth, during the Wirth circus tour of Tasmania in 1888.

"Gertie was about five, and May . . . was about two years old. Their mother had abandoned the children while their father was away for several days. The girls were so hungry they would go and rummage in the dirt boxes for food until a neighbor saw them, took them in and gave them something to eat. The children were brought to the circus the night before it was to leave. I sat them on some sacks by my trunk. They looked scared to death. May started to cry so Gertie put her arms around her and petted her. At first Louisa did not want them but John was so sorry for them that he adopted them. When their father was sent for, he came to the circus. He wanted the children to join the circus. Afterwards, Gertie and May learnt the 'business' and became fine circus artists."<sup>11</sup>

After John Wirth died in 1894 during the Wirth Circus tour of South Africa Louisa assumed care of Gertie and May. Philip and George Wirth paid Louisa her husband's share in the show.<sup>12</sup> Louisa, Gertie and May, made their way back to Australia and Louisa bought a fruitshop at 48 Druitt Street, Sydney.

#### America

After two years with FitzGerald's Circus, Gus decided to take his eldest children (Daisy, Cass, Syl, Reg and Philip) and Louisa's adopted daughters, May and Gertie, to the United States to try their luck. Only the infant Adrian remained behind, in the care of Louisa. Alf St. Leon and his family had arrived in America in 1898. Good circus work soon came their way. Perhaps there had been letters from Alf, encouraging Gus and his children to come over. In any case, for such a talented family as Gus St. Leon's there was probably a lack of opportunity in Australia. Gus' eldest boys had already a fine acrobatic act when they departed Australia. Seven years spent in circus and vaudeville in the United States and Mexico refined the act considerably.

The family left Australia in September 1901 in the company of another showman, Sammy Bernard. For a few months the group idled between various islands in the south Pacific, calling in to places such as Tahiti and Raratonga to exhibit Bernard's marionette show to the natives. From the islands, Gus and his family went on to Vancouver. They joined Ringling

Brothers Circus soon after.<sup>13</sup>

#### Ringling Bros.

The remuneration that Gus sought for his family from the Ringlings, adequate for a family employed in an Australian circus, was ridiculous by American standards. The Ringlings tripled Gus' asking price and engaged them all.<sup>14</sup> The family toured the United States for two seasons, 1902 and 1903 with Ringling. In 1902, the Ringlings' circus consisted of 400 horses, 300 performers and scores of trained animals.

The big show opened its 1902 tour in Chicago on Wednesday, 9 April. There was no parade. Judicious advertising was sufficient notification that the Ringlings were in the city. Crowds of Chicagoans packed the spacious Coliseum to the doors. The show travelled on three trains at this stage. The 300 performers that Ringling's boasted included the "gentlemen," Gus St. Leon, Philip, Syl, Reg and Cass St. Leon, and the "ladies," Daisy, Gertrude and May St. Leon.<sup>15</sup> The St. Leon men were among Ringling's clowns. The clown band, under the leadership of Steve Mico, included Philip, Syl, Gus and Reg St. Leon.<sup>16</sup>

The official Ringling program of 1902 included, as Display No. 4 "a highly skilful medley of contortion specialties, hand balancing and unique performances on the high wire, [by] two petite sisters in acrobatic pastimes, the Leon (sic) sisters in ring No. 3 (Gus' stepdaughters, Gertie and May); as Display No. 8, a "series of international athletic and acrobatic sensations," featuring "the latest and most elite novelties, statuesque acrobatics by the Australian experts," The Eight St. Leons, in ring No. 3 (the whole Gus St. Leon family); as Display No. 13 "pleasing novelties in high air sensations by eminent artists" and featured The St. Leon Sisters in "exploits on two swaying aerial swings," in ring No. 1 (Gertie and May again).

The 1902 Ringling tour finished in

Monticello, Arkansas, on Saturday, 15 November. The circus had attracted crowds of extraordinary proportions during its tour that year. For example, for the visit to Greenville, Texas, on Wednesday 22 October, the management had to try to make seats for 16,000 people hold 18,000.

Gus and his extended family were re-engaged for the 1903 edition of Ringling Bros. A brief season at the Coliseum, Chicago opened the tour on 9 April. The program spread over three rings and two stages. Some highlights were Display No. 3, comprising "mid-air performances of exceptional skill, daring and endurance" and featuring exploits on two swaying aerial swings by the St. Leon sisters, in ring No. 1 (Gertie and May); as Display No. 11, a "potpourri of phenomenal performances" by artists of "skill and diversified talent." Included in this display, in Ring No. 3, were "the latest in feats and most elite novelty statuesque acrobatics" by the Australian experts, The Five St. Leons. (Cass, Syl and Reg and two others, unidentified); as Display No. 14, a number of thrilling and varied equestrian specialties. Included in this display, in Ring No. 3, was an artistic double carrying act, featuring "exceptionally clever equestrian feats" by Mr. Syl St. Leon and Miss Daisy St. Leon. In ring No. 1 were Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hobson and in ring No. 2 were Reno McCree and Miss May Davenport. All three were carrying acts, and all were "beautifully dressed and gracefully ridden."<sup>17</sup>

James A. Bailey, at the head of Barnum & Bailey, countered the Ringling competition by strengthening his own forces for the 1903 season, his first American season after his five year European tour. Bailey staged elaborate street parades which included the Two Hemispheres bandwagon,

The Gus St. Leon family clown band on Ringling Bros. Circus in 1902. Al Conover collection.





one of the largest and most ornate circus wagons ever built. The Ringlings and Bailey avoided any head-on clash however as both managements knew that two enormous circuses engaged in direct competition with one another would be an expensive and wasteful exercise.

The Ringling circus played a two day stand in Toronto, Ontario, 8 and 9 June, 1903 to immense business. It was even "bigger and better" than on the occasion of its last visit two years previously. The show arrived in Toronto early on Sunday morning, the day before its opening, and although rain fell during the afternoon hundreds of performers took advantage of the free afternoon to visit places of interest in and around the city. During the parade the following day, a fire broke out in a city office block. In the streets, the fire engines and the parade threatened to mix. The tangle was unsorted without anyone being injured. After that night's show, as Gus St. Leon and Al Miaco were standing on the railroad track near their cars, an express train rushed by and nearly sent them to the "great beyond."<sup>18</sup>

Ringling played Sacramento on Wednesday, 2 September, 1903. The Californian state capital was ablaze with sunshine when the parade started, some of the troopers nearly falling from their horses with sunstroke. Business was good, so good that the officials of the state fair protested against the Ringlings securing so much money. The people flocked to the circus in such large numbers that the seating force had hard work to accommodate them. Mr. Alf Ringling, Mrs. Ringling and son Richard joined the show there to remain with it until San José. Gus St. Leon and son Philip caught up with the show from Chicago that day. Philip was sick in the windy city and his father, an "excellent nurse," looked after his welfare.<sup>19</sup>

At Weatherford, Texas, on Friday, 17 October 1903, even the Ringlings 22 tier seats were insufficient to hold all the people. The Ringlings provided straw for the late comers to sit on. From as far away as 25 miles, people travelled to see the Ringling show. Two trains alone brought in 1,144 people from outlying districts.<sup>20</sup> The 1903 tour finished in Malden, Missouri, Friday, 6 November.<sup>21</sup>

The following year, 1904, the family was going to be a Ringling "centre ring" attraction. Instead of accepting a re-engagement, it spent two years touring Mexico and Central America.<sup>22</sup>

#### South of the Border

Gus and his family went down to

join a Mexican show, Trevino's Circus. Reg became "a bit of a terror" with the girls there. The boys learnt to speak Spanish amongst themselves, a personal method of communication that they would retain even after returning to Australia. Daisy, Gus St. Leon's only

daughter, married Alfred George Honey, a London-born gymnast, at Pahuca, Mexico on 10 February 1904. Their daughter Golda, the first of seven children, was born in Mexico later that year.

The St. Leons added a little Mexican boy to their acrobatic act. He was a "poor little kid" named Jose who ate only one meal a day.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, he learned to have the normal three. But Jose turned out to be a very good "top" man in the acrobatic act.<sup>24</sup>

In a little town called Juarez, the family could not agree whether to return to Australia or to go back to the United States.<sup>25</sup> Gus wanted to go home. The younger boy, Philip, and the adopted girls, Gertie and May, were under his influence, more than his older children. In any case, Gus and Philip, both riders, relied on circus work. The older children, as acrobats, could work vaudeville as well as circus, as could Daisy's husband, a gymnast. So, early in 1905, Gus and Philip, along with Gertie and May, returned to Australia.

The rest of the family returned to San Francisco, spending the winter of 1904-1905 practicing in a gymnasium at Alameda, in San Francisco, owned by a Mr. Mangan. As fine acrobats, the St. Leon brothers (Cass, Syl and Reg) needed no further teaching but they often argued over who was at fault in particular routines. They engaged another acrobat of mature age to observe them in practice and settle their differences of opinion.<sup>26</sup> The investment must have paid off as Mangan, an acrobat himself, later declared the St. Leons to be the finest lot of acrobats Australia ever sent to America.<sup>27</sup> True, but until that time they were probably the *only* acrobats that Australia had exported to America.

#### Central America

They--Gus St. Leon's family that remained behind--organized a little show of their own and travelled through Central America for 12 months around 1906.<sup>28</sup>

"They did marvelously well until over-



Phil St. Leon (aka Phil Wirth) with Rill, May and Stella Wirth on Wirth's Circus in Australia c.1908.

taken by bad luck, the result of circumstances entirely unconnected with their show itself, and consequently in no way due to the want of merit or mismanagement on their part."<sup>29</sup>

During the construction of the Panama Canal, President Theodore Roosevelt offered a cash incentive to any circus company that would visit Panama to entertain the large number of workmen employed there. That was sufficient encouragement for the St. Leons to attempt to charter a small steamer at a place called Progresse to Belize, in British Honduras. The best boat available was an Indian schooner, a sailing vessel of about 35 tons. The four horses were placed in the hold. The family and the rest of the company camped on deck. This meant close quarters for the ten women, two infants, and 35 men, especially as the ship was often becalmed. The usual four day trip lasted 29 days. Provisions aboard would last only ten days. The little company met with one incident after another.

The trip was one of great discomfort made only worse by the blazing heat during the day and the tropical rain during the night. There was no shelter on board. When it rained, women and babies huddled under an old, leaky tarpaulin, holding candles in one hand and tins to catch drips of water in the other. The men, too, huddled under a tarpaulin, lying on their backs, legs in the air, to make a slope for the rain to run off.

Soldiers were continuously on duty along the coastal districts as the Mayan Indians were "troublesome." When becalmed while travelling along the coast, the boat had to drift to sea for fear of being attacked by the natives if it came too close to the shore. On other occasions, severe squalls struck the small boat. Men and women became weak with lack of food, and the horses



could hardly stand in their stalls. There was nothing for the little company to do in these circumstances but to keep their spirits up. A band of 14 players, including the St. Leon boys, used to play each night on the deck. At several places along the coast where the boat was able to put in, the St. Leon band played music for the local people.<sup>30</sup>

The little boat sailed on to Acension Bay, where it anchored so that the horses could be taken ashore for a spell. Hoisted over the side of the boat in slings, the starved horses could not stand up when brought ashore. They had to be massaged for hours to recover their strength. The same night a schooner owned by a wealthy Mexican trader anchored offshore. The Mexican landed with his party and seeing the St. Leons' instruments asked if they would accompany him and play at a dance. The Mexican turned out to be the same trader who had supplied substandard feed for the St. Leons' horses a few ports-of-call earlier. The St. Leons asked \$100 to play instead of the usual \$80. At that price, the trader declined the St. Leons' services. The trader remarked, "My boy and his concertina will have to do." The trader and his party drove off in an old wagon, the boy with the concertina playing in the back. The little party wound their way along the beach and around a headland, not knowing that a group of Indians lay in wait. None survived the ensuing ambush except one who feigned death. He escaped, running back along the beach, breathless and terrified, to tell the circus people what had happened. Twenty dollars had saved the lives of the St. Leons and their company.

"And how we scampered back to the ship! We had to swim the tired horses out and hoist them aboard again with the hand slings. Their weight was so heavy that the little ship took on a dangerous list. In the end, the captain had to cast a balancing anchor, and we managed to get them aboard with a great deal of excitement and bustle--and with the fear always in the back of our minds that the Indians would come before we had everything on board."

In British Honduras the little company spent five months in quarantine, effectively ruining its plans of ever reaching Panama.<sup>31</sup> After that experience, the St. Leons returned to the United States but lost their entire outfit on the return journey.

**American Vaudeville**  
But there was plenty of work

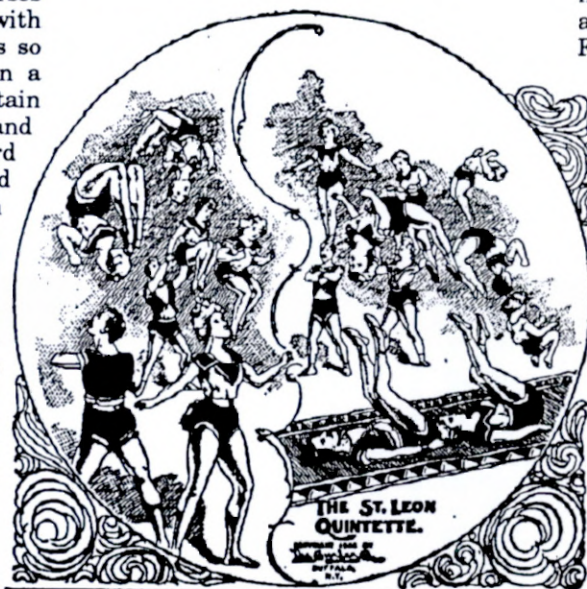
awaiting them on the American vaudeville stage. Acrobatic acts, usually one to open and another to close the bill, strongly impregnated American vaudeville programs at that time.<sup>32</sup> The Five St. Leons typically consisted of Cass, Reg and Syl St. Leon, Jose as top mounter and a comedy acrobat.

America had so modernized vaudeville that either evening or walking dress was the standard attire in which to present acrobatic offerings. By that time German acrobats, big and slow, were in vogue. The St. Leons' body dresses and old style circus tights were a novelty to a new generation of American vaudeville-goers. The St. Leons' acrobatic dress was so old it was new again. In contrast to the heavy German acrobats, the St. Leons were young, and possessed of good heads of curly hair and lovely figures.<sup>33</sup>

On a few occasions, The Five St. Leons shared the same bill as Al Jolson, whose act on one of the vaudeville circuits immediately preceded theirs.<sup>34</sup> Although Jolson was still fresh before the American public, he was already a "hit." Audiences would not let him off the stage, let alone allow a troupe of acrobats on to close the show after him. To conclude his numerous encores, Jolson had to go offstage and come back on with the St. Leons. He did a little "tommy roll" and a leap frog with their act, then went straight across and slipped away, off the other side of the stage. The St. Leons then went into their act.<sup>35</sup>

Even Jolson could be out of work in those days. On one occasion he had to rely surreptitiously on the St. Leons for sustenance. It happened when Jolson

The Alfred St. Leon troupe as depicted in the 1903 Forepaugh-Sells Circus courier. Pfening Archives.



and the St. Leons were both down on their luck and sharing a room in New York. When Cass, as manager of the St. Leon act, landed a job for the St. Leons at the Palace Theatre, he arranged a fresh book of meal tickets at an Italian restaurant to last them until they received their first week's pay. Little José used to say "I'm not hungry Uncle Syl, I'm not hungry this time, give my ticket to Al." The St. Leons did not know that Jolson was broke too and that José was letting him have one of his meal tickets every day. The first night they got paid, the brothers got back to their rooming house and tipped out all the money they had earned on the bed. José rolled his big brown eyes and exclaimed "Gee! Beef steak tomorrow!"<sup>36</sup>

In New York, Cass, Syl and Reg teamed up with a Jewish acrobat named Moses (Moe) Aarons, a knock-about comedy man who begun his career as an Arab tumbler. Moe turned out to be a "marvel of mercurial activity" in the act. Although silent throughout, he tumbled so humorously that it was far better than any ordinary clown language. Shortly after Moe joined the troupe, José was killed in an accident after practice one day when a train cut his legs off. The last thing he said was "Uncle Syl, will I be able to do acrobats with no toes?" He died that evening. The St. Leons recruited a youth named Georgie Smith as their new top mounter.<sup>37</sup>

The Five St. Leons acrobatic act worked the big American vaudeville circuits, including Keith Orpheum and the Pantages. Each engagement on a vaudeville circuit lasted about ten or twelve weeks although Pantages "time" meant three or four months of work. The Gruman theatres and a Chinese theatre in Los Angeles were among the other locations that The Five St. Leons worked around 1907-1908.<sup>38</sup> Cass became a founding member of The White Rats, an American vaudeville organization established for the mutual protection of performers and managers.<sup>39</sup>

From time to time, the St. Leon acrobatic act had undergone changes in personnel and content during its travels throughout the United States but it finally came to consist of Cass, Syl and Reg St. Leon, Moe Aarons, and Georgie Smith as top mounter. The boys spent their last year in the United States, 1908, with the Norris & Rowe Circus and Hippodrome.<sup>40</sup> The Norris & Rowe management billed the Australian acrobats as "The Austral St. Leons," all the way from Melbourne.



Their contract with Norris & Rowe required the St. Leons to turn double twisters and double somersaults from the bare ground, difficult feats that few acrobats had accomplished then.<sup>41</sup>

By this time also, Daisy's husband, Alf, had formed a partnership with another gymnast named Frank Cherry. Billed as Honey & Cherry, the two gymnasts gave an accomplished and daring triple horizontal bar performance.

Back in Australia, Gus St. Leon and the rest of his family signed up with Wirth Bros. Circus during the years 1905-1908. During this time, Philip perfected his female impersonation riding act as "Senorita Philipina." In the winter of 1908, Gus and Philip teamed up with Sammy Bernard and the Walter St. Leon family for a tour of Western Australia. They were in Albany when the Great White Fleet of the U.S. Navy called into port.

All the years the family of Gus St. Leon were in America and Mexico, the family of Alfred St. Leon had starred in American circus too. As can be gathered, each family went their own ways. The two families together might have made a formidable combination. The Alfred St. Leon family was with Forepaugh-Sells during 1902-1904.

Late in 1908, Gus cabled his children in America to offer them an engagement to come home and tour their native land again.<sup>42</sup> The cable was timely for the work available for the St. Leons in America had begun to dry up. Gus was eager to get the family circus going in Australia again.<sup>43</sup> The desire to return home proved strong. They sailed, together with Alf and Daisy Honey and Frank Cherry, by the *Ventura*, the regular steamer on the San Francisco-Sydney run. The voyage across the Pacific in those days was about a month's duration. Disembarking in Sydney on 26 December 1908, the boys went straight to the Stadium, the principle Sydney boxing venue, to catch that afternoon's historic fight between Jack Johnson and the "great white hope," Tommy Burns.<sup>44</sup>

### Australian Vaudeville

The St. Leons learned a lot while they were in the United States, things that helped them make a living all their lives.<sup>45</sup> But, having being absent from Australia for the last seven years, the St. Leon boys returned to an Australia with which they were barely familiar. Compared to the great United States of America, this was a country somewhat behind the times. The best



The Five St. Leons in Australian vaudeville in 1908.

hotels still relied on gas. The lesser hotels had candles.<sup>46</sup> They came back with many American expressions, expressions that were new to Australia—and they could all speak Spanish.<sup>47</sup>

Examples of American cultural influence were everywhere. The Great White Fleet of the U. S. Navy had paid Sydney a visit only a few months before. An American showman, Bud Atkinson and another American, J. D. Williams, had conceived and built Sydney's first penny arcade. Atkinson and Williams brought out five hundred pounds worth of one-cent pieces from America to work the machines. The opening stopped the trams in George Street, Sydney's main thoroughfare. Within two weeks, Atkinson and Williams ordered another five hundred pounds worth because people had souvenirs, the American one-cent pieces.<sup>48</sup>

The two troupes of performers, The Five St. Leons and Honey & Cherry, were not long in obtaining engagements with Harry Rickards' vaudeville organization, the principle Australian vaudeville circuit then. Sydney's *The Theatre* was moved to comment, "[We like] to see Australians succeeding in their own country. Australians have been kept back too long, through Australians themselves, because of their want of a patriotic spirit, or out of sheer stupidity, being disposed to pay outsiders more for giving them less. Managers of course have had to cater to these un-Australian Australians accordingly. Consequently it is distinctly pleasing to see Mr. Rickards doing at

least a little to break down this absurd prejudice by so readily engaging the [Five St. Leon] act . . . and possibly the triple-horizontal bar performance by Honey and Cherry."<sup>49</sup>

The two troupes opened at the Rickards' Opera House in Melbourne, The Five St. Leons at a salary of £75 per week, on 27 January 1909.<sup>50</sup> After some time without regular practice, they exercised at St George's Hall, Newtown (an inner Sydney suburb) before leaving for Melbourne. They were a marvelously clever combination of well built, perfectly trained acrobats. Their tumbling comprised many tricks entirely new to Australia, and from beginning to end everything was done with a precision, a vim, and a thrill.<sup>51</sup>

Rickards gave the Five St. Leons star billing with his New Tivoli Vaudeville Company, but not quite truthfully, as "absolutely one of the most astounding acrobatic acts on earth, direct from Ringling Bros. Circus, Chicago." The troupe, the three brothers St. Leon and Georgie Smith neatly dressed in scarlet knickerbockers and white jerseys, and Moe in his clowning garb, performed without any appliances and their astonishing and difficult acrobatic feats were enthusiastically cheered at their first Melbourne matinee.<sup>52</sup> The journalistic criticism was not unequivocal, however, as the Melbourne correspondent for Sydney's *Bulletin* described The Five St. Leons as a new turn of "considerable merit and no novelty." Perhaps the troupe was just having an off day but "As their old family name indicates, the St. Leons are circus acrobats addicted to turning somersaults; but in the cleverest things they do they are only moderately proficient, and their brilliant successes last week only served to break the monotony of their unsplendid failures."<sup>53</sup>

With that sole exception the Melbourne and, subsequently, the Adelaide press heaped praise on the troupe. From Adelaide, the troupe went to Sydney to appear at Rickards theatre. But the great juggler Cinquevalli was in Sydney with the result that, to get over the difficulty of two exceptionally expensive turns in the same programme, Rickards had to ask the St. Leons to stand down for a fortnight.<sup>54</sup> The St. Leons objected. They went along to J. C. Bain, the manager of James Brennan's National Amphitheatre, who gave them a three week engagement and they appeared at the National between 27 March and 16 April 1909. Mary Sole was in the audience in Sydney the Saturday night



they opened at the National Amphitheater and later described them as "a spectacular acrobatic act, one of the best ever to come out."<sup>55</sup> To the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the best item on the bill that evening was The Five St. Leons. Their "acrobatic feats were something out of the way, and drew a good deal of applause. These acrobats are Australian, and their tricks include somersaulting from each others shoulders, tumbling all about the stage and some trick contortion work."<sup>56</sup>

The best critique of the St. Leons' opening Sydney performance came from *The Theatre*. It seemed to give the lie to the earlier disparaging remarks of *The Bulletin*. "The St. Leon Troupe of Acrobats opened last Saturday and received an ovation. They are, without doubt, one of the finest combinations in the world. They handle on top the biggest and heaviest man in the business, Reg St. Leon, who weighs 178 lb. Among the wicked tricks which delighted and amazed the huge audience was a round-off flip-flap somersault to the shoulders, a thing I have never seen done by any acrobat in Australia, and a somersault across . . . from one three high onto the other, an item which very few acrobats in the world undertake to do. It is extremely dangerous, one fall being all that is required. Standing doubles, all varieties of full twist and double somersaults to shoulders are mere play to the St. Leons. Cass is a tower of strength weighing but 135 lb. To see him catch the 178 pounder is a treat. Reg for a man nearly thirteen stone is a very active tumbler. He is one of the best pirouette turnovers in the world and so far as commanding himself in the air goes, he can stop his revolution, cast it or continue it just as he pleases. Syl features an extremely dangerous cart position wherein his head is but half-an-inch from the ground. The trick is technically known as the 'Baroni' act. George, the baby of the troupe, is a daring flyer through the air and twists and turns like at Catherine Wheels. Some of the clown's antics are very clever. He is as active as a flea and he spins on his neck, takes a 14 feet in length dive and lands on the back of his neck rolling into a ball like a 'possum and gets tangled up with himself generally in a way that is highly amusing and mystifying. As a finale Cass understands a three high weighing over three times as much as himself. This astounding team is in for a very long run."<sup>57</sup>

James Brennan boasted that his prices would remain the same, notwithstanding the "enormous expense"



Daisy St. Leon Honey, daughter of Gus, with daughters c.1912.

involved in engaging The Five St. Leons.<sup>58</sup> J. C. Bain, Brennan's manager, said that The Five St. Leons were the most expensive engagement that he ever made for the National. For the three weeks that the act was there, the business was a record for the building.<sup>59</sup>

At the end of the three weeks, Bain wanted to extend their engagement. Moreover, the St. Leons had other offers from Newcastle and New Zealand. Even Wirth's Circus, which opened its annual Sydney season about that time and practically the only circus of note in Australia,<sup>60</sup> offered The Five St. Leons one hundred pounds a week to appear in their program.<sup>61</sup> The St. Leons refused them all. They might have remained in vaudeville a good while longer but for the fact that they wanted to start out with their own show,<sup>62</sup> a big representative Australian circus of their own<sup>63</sup> and their principal object in returning to Australia.

#### Gus St. Leon's Great United Circus

In the meantime, the rest of the family (Gus, son Philip, adopted girls Gertie and May) congregated in Sydney. The Five St. Leons and Honey & Cherry closed with the National Amphitheater, Friday 16 April. The following day the entire Gus St. Leon family resumed their circus travels with 18 wagons and forty head of horses,<sup>64</sup> as partners in a show styled Foley, Dale and St. Leon's.<sup>65</sup> The show opened its big canvas for the first time at Liverpool, then a large town on Sydney's outskirts, on Monday 19 April.<sup>66</sup> It was the first time the Gus St. Leon family had been all together for some years. The new combination headed towards Victoria.<sup>67</sup> After the partnership with Foley, Dale &

St. Leon dissolved, the circus was renamed Gus St. Leon's Great United Circus.

Before they left America, Reg St. Leon requested several New York music publishers to send him the latest releases of band music after he returned to Australia. The St. Leons' circus band was thus able to play the latest American brass band and ragtime music as it travelled Australia, a year or two before it reached the country though normal distribution channels.<sup>68</sup>

In the years leading up to and during the First World War, the Great United became Australia's leading provincial circus. Run along the same lines as the original St. Leon's Circus, it ranked as one of the great all-time circuses of Australia.

The St. Leons brought their American circus and vaudeville experience to their new Australian circus enterprise. The write-ups of the day suggest a consistency of excellence and novelty seen neither before nor since in an Australian provincial circus. It was an outstanding circus. Its statutory act was copied but never equalled. Its tumbling had been good enough for Ringling. Their bareback riding was "real quality" and their circus band was the best in the country.<sup>69</sup>

Some of Gus' children subsequently returned to the U. S. Philip St. Leon joined the May Wirth troupe on Ringling in 1917. Mrs. Daisy St. Leon Honey returned in 1927 with her husband and family of acrobats. Time and nappies permitting, I will prepare further articles for *Bandwagon* about them.

#### Sources

Information for this article comes from two principle sources produced by the author, in addition to contemporary newspapers. These are:

*Australian Circus Reminiscences*, Sydney: 1984. [Privately published manuscript] ISBN 0-9593315-1-4.

*The Silver Road: The Life of Mervyn King, Circus Man*, Springwood, NSW: Butterfly Books, 1990. ISBN 0-947333-10-X.

The interview material, as sourced in the footnotes, is derived from these two works.

#### Notes

1. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.
2. *Mackay Mercury*. 13 May 1895.
3. Alic Orlandi was well known in North Queensland by his native name, "Reka." He left his tribe to join the Gus St. Leon circus. Orlandi performed the remarkable feat of turning a double somersault from a solid block of wood.
4. *Tamworth News*. 21 February 1896. It is not clear whether Mr. Young had been the circus bandmaster. If he had, there is the obvious inference that he was also



known as Ben Kruger, the bandmaster who had been a partner with the St. Leons a few years earlier, given the proclivity with which travelling showmen adopted romantic pseudonyms for their own self-promotion. The real "Kruger" was of course the surname of the leader of South Africa's Boers.

5. Interview with Mary Sole Lindsay, 1973

6. *Tamworth News*, 10 July 1896.

7. *Tamworth News*, 1 October 1897.

8. Interview with Allan St. Leon, 1973.

9. NSW Registrar-General marriage certificate.

10. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975

11. Manuscript of Rill Wirth.

12. Manuscript of Rill Wirth.

13. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

14. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

15. The name "Wingate" later became Gertie's and May's customary show business pseudonym.

16. Route book of Ringling Bros. season of 1902, held by the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.

17. *Billboard*, 18 April 1903.

18. Ringling route book, 1903.

19. Ringling route book, 1903.

20. Ringling route book, 1903.

21. Circus Annual, The Ringling Route Book for the Season of 1903, held by the Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin. A lengthy account is given of the tour of

1903, a very long narrative extending over several pages.

22. A report in the *Richmond River Herald* of 16 February 1912 said that the Gus St. Leon family went to Europe, after their Ringling engagement, and returned in 1904 to New York where they played more large engagements. The marriage of Daisy to Alf Honey at Pahuca, Mexico in February 1904 would seem to discount a European visit that year, unless the family had split up.

23. Mervyn King, in *The Silver Road*.

24. Interview with Sadie St. Leon, 1975.

25. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

26. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

27. *Theatre Magazine*, 1 February 1913.

28. *Referee*, 7 April 1909.

29. *Theatre*, 1 February 1909.

30. *Referee*, 7 April 1909.

31. *Referee*, 7 April 1909.

32. *Referee*, 7 April 1909.

33. Interview with Peggy St. Leon, 1975.

34. Mervyn King, in *The Silver Road*.

35. Mervyn King, in *The Silver Road*.

36. Interview with Sadie St. Leon, 1975.

37. Interview with Mervyn King, 1974.

38. Interview with Mervyn King, 1974.

39. *Theatre*, 1 February 1909.

40. *New York Clipper*, 1908, p. 1319.

41. *Referee*, 7 October 1908.

42. *Richmond River Herald*, 16 February 1912.

43. Interview with Mervyn King, 1974.

44. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

45. Interview with Peggy Joseph, 1975.

46. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

47. Interview with Sadie St. Leon, 1975.

48. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1975.

49. *Theatre*, 1 February 1909.

50. *Richmond River Herald*, 24 December 1909.

51. *The Theatre*, 1 February 1909.

52. *Argus*, 29 January 1909.

53. *Bulletin*, 4 February 1909.

54. *The Theatre Magazine*, 1 August 1913.

55. Interview with Mary Sole Lindsay, 1973.

56. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 March 1909.

57. *The Theatre*, 1 April 1909.

58. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1909.

59. *The Theatre*, 1 August, 1913.

60. *Variety*, 12 June 1909.

61. Interview with Mary Sole Lindsay, 1973.

62. *The Theatre*, 1 July 1922.

63. *The Theatre*, 1 February 1909.

64. *The Theatre*, 1 August, 1913.

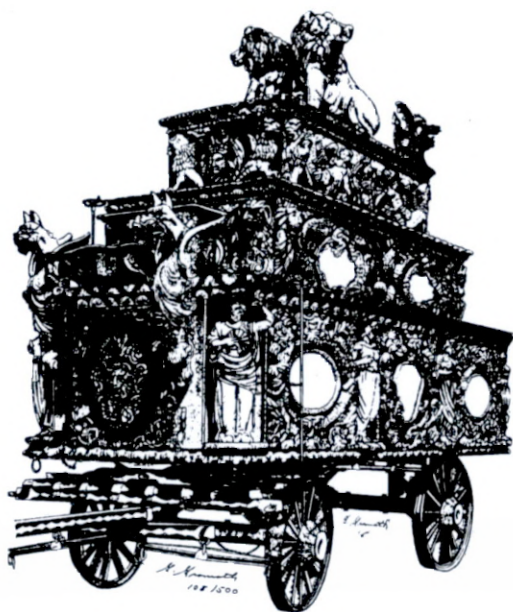
65. Interview with Mary Sole Lindsay, 1973.

66. *Variety*, 12 June 1909.

67. *The Theatre*, 1 May 1909

68. Interview with Adrian St. Leon, 1973.

69. "The St. Leons" in *The Outdoor Showman*, undated clipping.



## Antique Circus Wagons Limited Edition Prints

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*This article, the galley proof of which was recently discovered in the Tom Parkinson papers at Circus World Museum, appears to have been written as part of Ringling-Barnum's 1923 campaigns against graft which was, in fact, an attack on its chief rival, the American Circus Corporation. It tells the story of how graft operated from an insider's perspective and suggests, rather naively, how concerned citizens could thwart this menace. Kid Harris was an old-time grifter who died in the 1930s, although the piece was undoubtedly ghost-written. There is no evidence this article was published at the time it was written.*

I think I may safely say that every normal man, woman and child loves the circus. We love it even as we love baseball. Yet there are circuses and circuses. By that I mean there some straight, legitimate, honestly conducted ones and there are others which are only cloaks or excuses for securing "easy" money through the operation of gambling devices, short changing and obscene dancing. The men who own and conduct such circuses are really not circus men, but parasite showmen.

It is of these parasite circus men that I shall write. And I shall write authentically and out of the fullness of experience, having traveled, during the past thirty years, with nearly every circus in the United States—the Sparks Show, the Al G. Barnes and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circuses being about the only exceptions (in as much as the proprietors of these organizations have always been opposed to graft in any form, never dared to "light" around them). I have been an "outside man" and an "inside man" on graft games, as well as a "fixer" for them. I have operated these nefarious games, and also short-changed people from coast to coast, in this country, and all through Canada, and I know whereof I speak. I experienced a genuine change of heart, having joined the Roman Catholic church and making a full confession to a priest. I have begun life anew. My conversion was not spectacular nor emotional, but real. I am neither a fanatic nor a reformer.

If I may seem overzealous in this matter I am about to present to the public I want you to know that it was because I earnestly and sincerely desire to do my utmost to make amends for the in-

# The Grafting Circus: an Expose

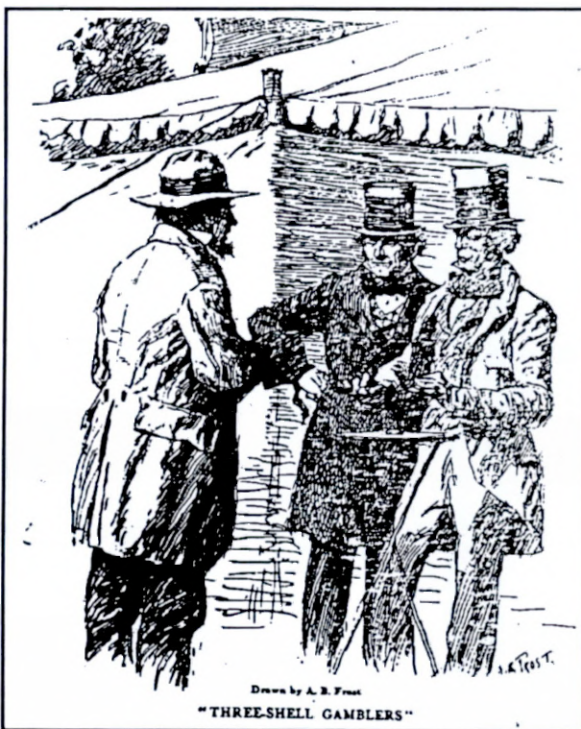
By "KID" HARRIS

finite amount of harm and evil I have perpetrated the many years I misdirected my energies with grafting circuses. For too long I have been a parasite; now I desire to become a usual member of society. But now to my subject, in sane, dispassionate, truthful manner.

How many Americans know that if gambling devices are operated in connection with a circus they are not operated by "followers," but are deliberately carried by the show and form a distinctive and highly profitable part thereof?

Also, how many Americans know that every graft circus (as the questionable tent show has ever been designated) carries a man who has an assistant whose work is to adroitly bribe, with tickets or with money, or with both, city and county officials, to the end that the ancient shell game (the little

A circus shell game as depicted in a turn-of-the-century magazine illustration. Circus World Museum collection.



Drawn by A. B. Frost  
"THREE-SHELL GAMBLERS"

black pill and the little square boxes being its present day garb), the equally antique three-card monte, various spindle and block games and other devices, all of them unfair, may be operated in the side show or on the the circus grounds?

And how general is the knowledge that graft circuses have always carried men (known among themselves as "short change" workers) who

although posing as ticket-sellers or candy butchers, deliberately steal money from patrons of the show and divide the spoils with the show management.

It is to acquaint the unsuspecting public with the facts concerning the cunningly-conceived system of organized graft and theft, in all its ramifications, and the slick methods of buying protection from criminal prosecution, which the "graft-circuses" use, that I write.

First, I desire to "wise up," or inform, the unsuspecting public, so that men may know to protect themselves and their friends when they attend a graft circus; secondly, I deem it my duty to let the general public know how a city's, or a county's police officials are bribed, in order that a grafting circus may ply its games of chance; to the end that this knowledge will awaken the clergy (Protestant, Catholic and Jewish alike), superintendents and principals of schools, members of boards of trade, chambers of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions and civic clubs and all patriotic and public-spirited citizens, to the great menace of the graft circus as a corrupter of the morals of young and old—for it starts countless boys and young men on the demoralizing road of gambling and loose living and plays havoc with the moral fiber of the public officials who permit themselves to be purchased.

Still another menace found with questionable circuses is the obscene dancing by women, this species of corruption being the natural outgrowth of the awry grafting psychology of the grafting proprietors.

But, let me begin at the beginning:

Every grafting circus carries an adjuster, better known in the language of the white tops as the fixer, patch or mender. This fellow is the man who talks with the police and prosecuting officials and other officials, and secretly arranges with them to operate gambling devices on the circus grounds.



The officials that must be "seen" in this connection are the chief of police, the city attorney, the mayor, the deputy sheriffs, the local judge and the justices of the peace, if the city or village is not a county seat; if the place be a county seat then, of course, the prosecuting attorney and the high sheriff are "seen" also.

Sometimes all of the officials will unofficially permit the games to operate; again, one of the officials will be opposed to "joints" (as the games are called). In such an event, if the "fixer" can not induce one of the other officials to cause the so-called "wrong" official to "lay off" and let the parasite showmen conduct their games, these grafters will "go over the head" of the "wrong" official, even tho he be mayor or prosecuting attorney. In such an event the grafting showmen "stall" the "wrong" official and "sneak" their games. If they can "stall" the unruly one away from the side show they will operate in the daytime; if the honest official insists on "looking around" and going into the side show, etc., the showmen will wait until night before they operate their "rackets," in any event they take on considerable care to watch the movements of the "wrong" official.

Anomalous as it may seem, occasionally an official, who is known to suppress poker games, craps, etc., in his own town, will accept a money bribe from a grafting circus and permit the show graft to operate for the day. He stays away from the side show and, if complaints come to him, he says that he has "seen nothing out of the way."

If a complainant is insistent and demands that the said official or the police go into the side show tent and see for themselves, the fixed official (or officials) will tip off the circus grafters and they will hurriedly cease operations and make an exit, via the back way hiding in the rear of the tent (which is partitioned by canvas) or "side-walling" out of the tent and getting away.

Sometimes a prominent citizen will go to a justice of the peace and ask for a warrant for a circus grafter who has swindled him in a game. The justice of the peace has, early in the day, been "seen" by the adjuster of the grafting circus; and, acting on the request of the said circus fixer, the justice of the peace endeavors to discourage the citizen. Speciously the justice will tell the citizen that the easiest way out is the



Joe Haworth (l.) and William Kellogg (r.) were fixers on graft shows in the 1920s. Both were with Cole Bros. Circus in 1942 when this photo was taken. Pfening Archives.

best; that, since the law works both ways, making player and gambler alike guilty, the best course to pursue, in order to avoid trouble, notoriety, etc., is to go to the circus management or to the circus "officer" and ask for a proper adjustment. The justice of the peace may or may not have received a money gift from the graft circus adjuster; but, in any event, he has received, unless he has scented a mouse and refused to accept from said fixer all the circus tickets he wanted or could make use of.

Not only is the public flim-flammed and fleeced by graft circus thieves operating games of chance, but robbers who travel with the graft circus and divide their ill-gotten gains with the parasite managers thereof, also operate in the tents, usually, but sometimes on the grounds, outside the tents. These robbers are so-called ticket sellers and, although they have reserved seat tickets for sale, their scheme is to change money with patrons of the show, very adroitly holding out a considerable amount of the change. This game is called "taking cake" or "shorting a guy."

These would-be ticket-sellers often times tell patrons of the show that they will give them reserved-seat tickets free of cost if they will accommodate them with some large bills for smaller change. In exchanging the money these false ticket sellers, of course, hold out as much as they think they can safely extract. They will cunningly fold the bills in such a way as to make it appear that the victim receives the full amount of change due him. Then these thieving ticket-sellers will try to thrust the change into the victim's pocket, or tell

the man to put the money into his pocket and hurry and get a seat in the big show "before it commences."

Often times the short changer has a accomplice, who rushes the victim to the seat before he has had time to count his change. The short changer works on the theory that, in the excitement of the circus, the victim will forget all about his change. However, the crook who did the short-changing either himself keeps an eye on the victim, or his accomplice does so, to observe whether he takes his money out and counts it. If the victim, after seating himself in

the circus, bethinks him to count his money he will, of course, discover the shortage and immediately go back to the man who cheated him.

The thief will endeavor to bluff the native by telling him that no such thing as an error occurred; that he, the victim, must have dropped the money; also that mistakes can be rectified only at the time made, the same as at a bank window. The experienced grafting circus man often succeeds in blunting the victim to such an extent that he believes that he must have lost his money, but if the victim is insistent and indicates that he will call a police officer, of course the thief will give him back the proper amount of money due him-taking care, by the way, to have the victim write his signature and address at the bottom of a printed form which is supposed to release the grafting show from any and all damages.

In returning the money (or throwing it back as it is called) the grafting circus man will, in many instances, repeat the short changing process. If the victim recounts his money again the short changer will finally give him the full amount due him. But in any event the native gets an awful run for his money.

The work of short changing is usually on in what is known as "the connection;" that is to say, in the interior of the canvas, between the menagerie and the big show, or main tent in which the circus performance proper is given; although in some instances the short-change man, with a big dangling from a strap thrown over one shoulder, will work in other parts of the menagerie or even outside, on the lot. With many grafting circuses the "candy butchers," the men who sell refreshments and others also short-change patrons. Also, with many of these shows, there are short-change



men who take nothing but "silver, that is, men who short change in silver only, and do not work in "paper" or bills. These men merely steal smaller amounts than their brethren who steal paper money.

Let me tell you how the adjuster or "fixer" with a graft circus works.

He arrives in town with his parasite circus, traveling in its "privilege car." He has an assistant who ordinarily parades under guise of "officer" or "detective" with the show. The two fixers eat breakfast at a city restaurant or hotel. Then the assistant hurries out and meets the chief of police, or some other police officer, to whom he introduces himself.

From the chief, or other officer, he ascertains the names of the mayor, sheriff, city attorney, deputy sheriffs, prosecuting attorney, justices of the peace, constables, detectives and city judge.

When the fixer in quest of these names first meets the man from whom he secures them he gives him reserved-seat tickets for himself and family and friends. The assistant fixer takes his list of names to the boss "mender." The fixers start out to learn if they can "tighten up" or "fix" the town so that the grafters may "work." The two fixers pay the municipal and state and county licenses for the show's exhibition. This work, of course, is legitimate. As soon as the licenses have been paid the fixers "feel out" the officials in reference to "working" graft. That is to say, the fixers question the officials as to their attitude and the attitude of the townspeople toward working or operating games of chance with the shows.

Meeting the chief of police, the fixer will shake hands and tell him that he represents the so and so circus. "How many have you in your family, Chief, besides yourself?" inquires Mister Fixer. The chief will inform the man as to the number in his family. Then the fixer will take out a pad of tickets from his pocket and tear off not only one for each member of the chief's family, but also several extras. Then he will give to the chief, saying, "Well, here is one for each member of your family and some extra tickets for your friends. Now, Mr. Chief, if you find that you may need more tickets, just come to me and ask for them. Don't buy any. You don't require any ticket for yourself, as your badge will admit you any place you may want to go."

By this time, the average chief will naturally feel rather good-natured toward the circus parasite. The fixer will then say something like this: "Now,

Chief, I will work in conjunction with you on the circus grounds today, maintaining order and seeing that everything goes smoothly. If I find that I may need the assistance of your men I shall call on them, and if they may need my help all they will have to do is to call on me. I don't anticipate any trouble, but if any complaint should arise all that I ask you to do is to come right to me. If I am not there, just ask for me and they will call me or my assistant.

"By the way, Chief," continues the fixer, "how are they in this town in reference to wheels and little games and things?" Perhaps the chief informs the grafting fixer to the effect that nobody will bother them. Then Mr. Fixer will say something like this to the Chief, "We have the usual little things that always go with circuses and carnivals and airs. These little novelty-gift enterprises will be in the side show."

"It might be a good plan to instruct your men to keep out of the side show, and then they won't see the rackets. And you might tell your men that if any complaint of any nature whatsoever arises, not to do anything, but to first come right to me. Now, Chief, you are put to more or less bother on circus day, and you might want to put on an extra man or two, so here's a little something to cover it." Where at the fixer will peel

An inside ticket seller with the traditional shoulder strap purse. Notice his counter is above the patron's eye level. Pfening Archives.



a ten or a twenty-dollar bill from a big roll and give it to the chief. This money, of course, is really intended for the chief's personal use and is a bribe.

The graft-circus "fixer" subsequently call on the sheriff, the city attorney, the prosecuting attorney and other police officers, and, in like manner bribe them--provided, of course, that the said officials are bribable. In each instance the first thing that the fixer does is to give the official all the tickets that he wishes, in many cases money is also given freely.

When the grafting fixer "weeds" an officer of the law, that is gives him a money bribe, he never fails to say something to the effect that, "If any complaint should arise at any time, day or night, not to do anything, but to come right to me." He will even say something like this: "If absolutely necessary we can close the things."

In calling on the justice of the peace, the fixer with the parasite circus usually merely give him an abundance of tickets, altho, sometimes, Mr. Justice also receives money. When the fixer fixes the Justice he will usually say: "Judge, you are put to more or less trouble on show day. Sometimes some of our working men want to quit us without giving any notice. That cripples us. Some of these men might come to see you in reference to getting out an attachment on the circus.

"If any them should come here, or, in fact, if anybody should come here with any kind of complaint pertaining to the circus or the circus people, all I ask you to do is not to issue any papers, but come and see me. If there is any difficulty or misunderstanding, or mistake, we will adjust it. And I will see that you do not lose any fees."

If a loser on one of the grafting circus games cannot be pacified or bluffed by Mr. Fixer, and approaches the police officials, or a justice of the peace, and insists on prosecuting the circus grafter, the police official who receives the complaint, or the justice of the peace, will, if he has been fixed, send or take the man back to the fixer, who will then return the man's money.

If a loser is not satisfied by getting back his money, and still insists that the police officials prosecute the circus grafters, the police or justice will "tip off" the circus fixer, who, in turn, will tip off the circus grafters to stop their games and make a hasty get-away, or disappearance.

And even tho warrants are sometimes issued for the circus grafters, they are seldom or never found. When they disappear hurriedly they sometimes hide in the side show, the big



show dressing room or elsewhere about the show lot. Oftentimes they go to the circus train, where they "plant" or hide in the privilege car or in some other car. In their efforts, to fool police officials and dodge arrest circus grafters have even been known to put on makeup and impersonate clowns.

Only in rare instances do these parasite circus men leave the show for a day or a few days, and then only when "wrong" officers, armed with warrants for them, follow the show in an attempt to arrest them. If the event of a police officer following a grafting circus to another town in pursuit of a gambler or a short changer, these thieving showmen call it a "come through."

Some circuses that carry games make a financial settlement with the grafters every night. Other graft circuses settle with the thieves once each week—on Sunday. The settlement is made in this manner:

The manager of the parasite circus will call the fixer into his private office on the circus train, usually in one end of the privilege car. Then the grafter who operates the spindle, for instance, is called into the office. Says the manager: "Joe Donkes, how much did you get today?" The man will answer somewhat in this wise: "Twelve hundred dollars."

Then the grafter's percentage of the fixing is deducted from \$1,200. By fixing is here meant the total amount of money that the fixer distributed that day, in bribing public officials. If there are three other games besides the spindle man's wheel, then the spindle man is charged twenty-five percent of the fixing. If the total fixing, that day, was two hundred dollars, the spindle man stands twenty-five percent of that sum, or fifty dollars is deducted from \$1,200, leaving \$1,150.

Next, the fixer's percentage is deducted from the \$1,150. The fixer's percentage runs from fifteen to twenty percent. If there are two fixers, as there usually are, with graft shows, they receive each, seven and one half or ten percent. Although often times the boss fixer will receive fifteen or twenty percent and pay his assistant a flat weekly salary. But the chief fixer usually settles for both. If the two fixers' percentage amounts to twenty percent, this twenty percent is deducted from the \$1,150. Twenty percent of \$1,150 is \$230. This amount, deducted from \$1,160, leaves a balance of \$920.

This balance is divided, equally, between the circus owner and the man who runs the spindle. That is to say the circus owner and the spindle-game man each receive \$460. The circus owner, alone, receives \$460.



Ginger Benson, cootch dancer with Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus in 1937. Pfening Archives.

The spindle man, out of his \$460, must pay a salary or a percentage to each of two or more confederates or accomplices. They are known as outside men, booster handlers or shills. These men assisted him in the operation of his gambling device.

These confederates are men who also travel with the grafting circus. They dress to appear like natives. These accomplices not only play the games, and, apparently win money, but they also hire local young men and men of all ages, in fact to assist them on the games as "cappers" or "boosters." The patrons of the show, seeing winnings go, apparently, to men and youth of their vicinity, do not hesitate to play the game.

The short-change man pays the fixer ten per cent of the money he steals, after which he divides the balance fifty-fifty with the circus management. Out of his fifty percent of the net the short-changer must pay a small sum to his accomplices. Again the circus owner retains all of his fifty per cent.

These circus grafters, or "grifters," as they are sometimes called, ordinarily occupy berths, sometimes staterooms, in the privilege car, but always they occupy berths or staterooms on the circus train, for which transportation they pay handsomely to the circus management.

Every grafting circus carries, as part of its train, a privilege car, sometimes called the pie car. If the graft circus is large enough to travel in two sections there are, as a rule, two of these cars,

one for each section. In the privilege car are tables on which crap games and poker games and roulette wheels are operated. Although coffee, sandwiches, pies and ham and eggs, etc., are sold in this car to any and all of the circus employees or attaches, from canvasmen and "razorbacks" (the men who load and unload the train) to performers and grafters. Whisky is also sometimes sold. The privilege car is really carried because it proves a source of considerable revenue to the thieving circus owners. The graft circus employees are usually paid off in this car at night when the gambling devices are in full operation. It is a motley throng that gathers around these crap and poker and roulette games in the privilege car. Performers, grafters and ticket sellers rub elbows with perspiring Negroes, canvasmen, cookhouse flunkies, balloon peddlers, property men and hostlers.

And even these games are crooked—for the phrase, "There is honor among thieves," cannot possibly be true.

Of course, an alert guard is kept over the privilege car of the graft circus, and only employees and attaches are admitted to its sacred interior. Sometimes an adjuster will bring the chief of police or some other official into the car and treat him to a drink of booze. But this is not often done—and only when the fixer is well acquainted with the officer and can absolutely trust him.

With some of these grafting circuses whisky is sold on the grounds—only, of course, to trusted employees. Before the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect the stuff was easier to secure and was sold more or less freely, but now a little more caution is taken.

Every graft circus carries immoral dancing, that is, the oriental, or hootchy-cootch dancing, executed by women. Although with some of these shows a man (female impersonator) dances with these women. High prices are charged for the Oriental dances. They are given for men only, in the rear of the curtain of canvas, in one end of the side show. The muscle-writhings of the shameless, degenerate, females certainly have a demoralizing and degrading effect on the youths and men who flock behind the curtain to witness them.

In towns which the fixers find "wrong" (that is to say, in towns in which officials, or even one of the officials, will not permit the operation of gambling devices) one or more of these gambling devices is operated back of the canvas curtain which hides the Oriental dances from the eyes of the wives and mothers. When the fixer





learns a town is "wrong," he informs the grafters to that effect and instructs them to lay off during the daytime, and to wait until night, and then "sneak" their games back of the hootchy-cootchy curtain immediately on the conclusion of the dances.

When gambling devices are in operation in the side show tent one fixer is always on guard duty at the entrance thereto. This is to enable him to watch out for officers of the law, whom he stops, in a deceitfully friendly manner, and stalls them, that is, does not admit them in the interior of the tent. The fixer employs various means to keep a police official out of the side show during gambling hours. He will try to hurry the officer to the big show—"so you can get a good seat and see it all," he will explain. Or he will tell him there has been some fighting back of the big top dressing room. Or he will concoct any kind of an excuse to inveigle the officer into leaving the vicinity of the side show.

If the officer insists on going into the side show, the fixer will, if he is certain that the man can be trusted not to double cross him, tell him to go in. As the official passes him, the fixer laughs, and in an undertone says, "but don't invest any money in anything in there."

Some grafting circuses have an electric bell system to warn the men at the gambling tables in the side show in the event of an emergency—such as a raid by police officials or a tip to close the games quickly. The fixer stationed at the door of the side show sees the approaching danger and immediately presses a button. A bell rings. There is a hurried closing of the games and in

The inside of the Hagenbeck-Wallace privilege car in 1927. Slot machines are on the right. Pfening Archives.

a few seconds both men and gambling devices are as completely lost to view as if the earth had swallowed up.

If grafters are arrested, as they sometimes are, in the operation of their games, they readily and gladly pay fines for gambling and thereby secure their freedom. A day or two later they are again just as flagrantly operating their games in the side show.

If the arrest of a circus grafter or shortchange man cannot be averted, the fixer hastens to the fellow's assistance and springs him, that is, stops at nothing to secure the release of the accused. Sometimes the fixer stands so favorably with the judge or chief of police that he can secure the grafters or short changer's release at little or no cost. Again, the fixer will put up a heavy bond for the appearance of his man. Of course, his man jumps the bond. In any case the arrested grafter is not abandoned. There is an unwritten law which causes the show grafters to rescue him from the hands of the police.

In the three months since I abandoned my grafting (I was hop-scotching, playing by myself, here and there at the time) I have kept away from shows. I have this season attended only one tent show—namely the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus. I take off my hat to the owners and creators and managers of this attraction. I had known it to be clean "strictly Sunday School," as we of the illegitimate circuses always used to term a legitimate circus; but I had not visited it in ten years; and to me, so recently reformed, it was revela-

tion. Not only is there no gambling or short-changing with the Ringling-Barnum Circus; but its management does not even tolerate Oriental dancing. Moreover, I noticed that this show carried detectives to actually safeguard and protect the patrons from possible thieves and pickpockets.

As I walked away from the lot whereon the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was playing, my mind could not help reverting to the thieving circuses with which I had worked as a grafter for so many years. And I asked myself this question: "Old man, what can you do to put a stop to this nefarious business which many circuses operate with impunity?" And quickly came the answer: "Expose it." This article is the result. It is my own story, in my own words. For the first time since my graduation from a Western university, years and years ago, I now and here utilize my knowledge of English in such a way as to make it serve a worthy purpose.

In closing I wish to tell the representative men and women of America that they, and they alone, can stop gambling and short changing and Oriental dancing with illegitimate circuses. However, to paraphrase a little. "Eternal vigilance is the price of safety." And, to prevent these abuses, they must be ever on the alert.

Let me explain, to the better element, in every village and city in the United States (and Canadians can likewise take advantage of my suggestions), just how they can prevent these graft circus irregularities.

When you learn that a circus is advertised to visit your village or city organize a committee of ministers, priests, rabbis, school principals and superintendents, teachers, editors and business men. Read this article to said committee and suggest that each member thereof give his or her time, on circus day during the hours the circus and side show will be open too observe the conduct of same. You will understand, of course, that your committee does not accuse any particular circus of operating games of chance, short chaining and obscene dancing but, in as much as activities as these have for years been found with certain circuses, your committee is perfectly justified in officially observing and circus.

The honest circus proprietors or managers such as legitimate showmen as Ringling Brothers or Charles Sparks, for instance, will gladly welcome such committee observation. Only the dishonest, grafting circus proprietors or managers will fear such a committee. To prevent the dishonest



circus manager from attempting to interfere with the work of such a committee of representative citizens it might be well for your committee to ask the chief of police to deputize them, so that they may have free access to all exhibition tents, and parts thereof, connected with the circus.

Remember, just because a circus manager or proprietor or fixer may say that his particular circus has none of the irregularities I have written about in this article, it will not necessarily follow that such is the fact. Accept his word, in good faith; but, just the same, have your committees on the job every minute of the opening hours of the big show and the side shows. And do not remove your committee from the job until the side shows have been pulled down and the last performance of the circus has terminated.

And tell your committee that it should not accept any courtesies from the circus management. The fixer or the manager of the a graft circus would only be too ready to "kill your committee members with kindness" if by doing, he could throw them off track until he could operate some gambling or short changing or obscene dancing. Let your committee members remember that they are your vigilance committee, and not guests of any manager, fixer, or proprietor. Being deputized as special officers they will not have to buy tickets to any show or part thereof.

And your vigilance committee should arrange this matter with the chief of police, or mayor, in advance of show day; for if they wait until the morning of circus day that the police chief and mayor may be too busy to see them--although representative citizens should always be entitled to an audience with a chief of police or mayor. And you may rest assured that if the circus men can induce the chief of police to dodge a committee of citizens who desire to be deputized, for show day, they will do it. If the mayor or chief of police tell you that it will not be necessary for you to form a vigilance committee, in as much as the police are perfectly competent to watch out and prevent grafting, short changing and obscene dancing in a circus, tell your official that in as much as graft circus officials often times "sneak" their nefarious games and dances and short changing stunts, you feel it your duty to assist the police. If the officials try to persuade you not to act as a vigilance committee tell them that although you have the utmost confidence in your police you feel that you are duty bound, to your community, to act as a vigilance com-

mittee, and that if the authorities will not cooperate in your public spirited movement you will go ahead and do your duty just the same, paying admission to the shows. Rest assured that no honest city or county officials will refuse to deputize you.

The vigilance committee should have a chairman to direct activities. One or two men should be stationed at the connection; two or more in the side show proper, one near each of the outside ticket-boxes and at the outside ticket windows and one at each refreshment stand. The chairman could do general patrol duty, frequently communicating with the other members of the committee. If a vigilance committee were so distributed the circus people would not dare to permit short changing, gambling or obscene dancing.

May I suggest that you, my reader, if you be a public spirited citizen, give this entire article to one of the leading clergymen of your community, with startling truth about the graft circus.

And to you, Rev. Minister or Rev. Father or Rabbi, who receives this article, may I ask you to preserve it for reference. And then, when next a circus is advertised to exhibit in your community, will you not reread this expose and take proper steps to form a vigilance committee to render a very necessary public service on circus day?

Surely you desire to protect the morals of your community. Remember, Rev., Sir or Rev. Father or Rabbi, this is the only method that can surely stop grafting circus men in their attempts to work their games and other species of thievery.

Let me repeat if a circus management is honest and carries no graft games, short-change men or cootch dancers, your committee will be welcomed. Only a grafting circus management can fear such inspection and observation.

And let me caution you in reference to your possible "letting up" on your com-

The privilege car of the Carl Haggenbeck-Great Wallace Circus in 1918. Pfening Archives.

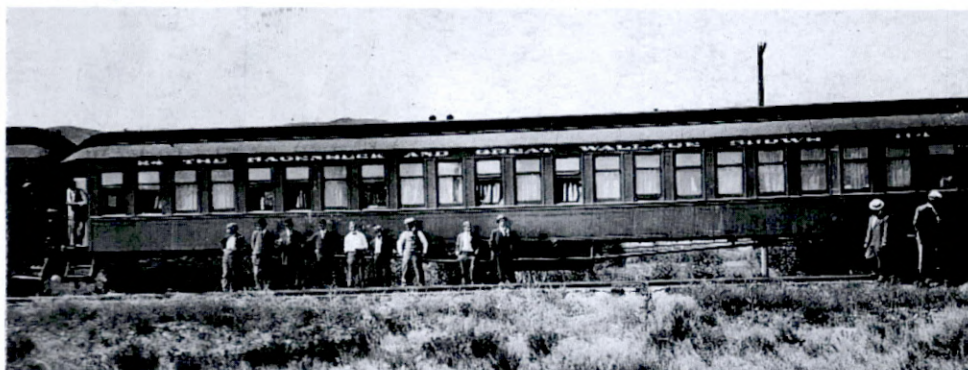
mittee investigation and observation if you find that a particular circus is not operating these activities.

The worst grafting circus in the world might be perfectly clean at the time of inspection, but five minutes later, if your backs were turned, it could be unspeakably dirty and dishonest and obscene. Fixers or managers or proprietors of grafting circuses sometimes eliminate grafting and short-changing and Oriental dancing because they have been told by honest city or county officials that officers would constantly be on duty to see that such abuses did not operate.

At the end of such a perfect "Sunday-school day" the fixer or manager or proprietor does not hesitate to ask the chief of police or the mayor or some other prominent official for a letter of recommendation--a letter saying something to the effect that no gambling, short-changing or obscene dancing exhibitions were carried by the so and so circus. The fixer shows the letter to the officials along the route of the show. The fixer is likely to receive orders from the chief of police of a town not to "bat an eye" (that is, not to attempt to work gambling or short-changing). At the close of the day the fixer asks the said chief to write a little letter telling how clean and inoffensive his show proved to be. This letter he will exhibit next day to the chief of B town. However, if the officials of B town can be bribed, the fixer's circus will that day be everything that the chief of A town said it wasn't.

It will not be enough for a vigilance committee to visit a chief of police or a mayor in advance of show day and ask the official to inform the circus management that gambling, short-changing and obscene dancing will not be permitted in your town.

The only thing that can prevent the fixer with grafting proclivities from attempting to bribe the police officials, or, failing in that, attempting to sneak gambling games, short changing and cootch dancing, is your vigilance committee.





## Philadelphia's Finest

In the good old days Brooklyn, Jersey City, and Philadelphia were rough on any circus that played their city, no matter how large or small the circus.

Brooklyn was no doubt the roughest. It was an every day occurrence to see the sailmaker going around and patching side wall that had been slashed the night before. The biggest casualty usually was the dressing tent. They would cut the ropes that held up the big top. At night it was not safe to walk in any dark spot around the grounds. It was not unusual to hear that some show hand had been held up and relieved of any money and watch they might have had on them. Day or night kids would roll rocks off the big top. It is a miracle these toughies never thought of setting any of the numerous tents on fire. In those days all the tents were paraffined each spring with kerosene and paraffin wax for water proofing.

The first section of the Ringling-Barnum Circus pulled into the Philadelphia freight yards bright and early Sunday morning May 7, 1922. There was a large crowd awaiting the arrival of the circus train. Soon wagons were rolling off the flat cars. The baggage horses and skinnners were waiting for the wagon they would take to the show grounds at 11th and Erie.

The lot was jammed with spectators waiting for the wagons. It did not take long to transform the dusty lot into a beehive of activity. With the arrival of the huge baggage wagons there appeared hammer gangs pounding wooden stakes into the earth. Shortly the center poles were in the air. Like magic the billowing white tops went up here and there. As soon as the menagerie tent was in the air the cages of

# THE CIRCUS STEWARD

## Part IV

By John M. Staley

wild animals were rolled in. The second section with the big top canvas was still enroute.

On another lot a short distance from the main grounds men were erecting the cookhouse. Further behind the cookhouse two horse tents were already in the air. Later they would house the baggage stock.

In those days Sunday was a day of rest for man and beast. Only work that had to be done was the order of the day. Performers and staff at times planned picnics, barbecues and Mulligans amongst their own groups. Some would "hotel up" to get a good hot bath and relax. Most every Sunday there were baseball games, either between departments or with a local team. If it was the later all the best players from all the circus teams would be picked to play the locals.

Monday was just another day for the show hands in Philadelphia. It was back into harness for another week. During the 1922 season Philadelphia was one of the three tough police cities where the show exhibited under canvas, the other two were Brooklyn and Boston.

John Brice, chief of circus police, was on the lot early Monday morning getting the police detail lined up for the week. Ollie Webb, cookhouse steward, was already prepared for the police. It

Waiters in the Ringling-Barnum cookhouse in 1922. Pfening Archives.

was a yearly event. In Philadelphia there were around one hundred police detailed for the entire week. I believe there was only one shift, from noon until the night performance was out and over. During the week Brice would pick up the meal tickets for the police. Each ticket was

dated and numbered and good only for dinner on that date. In prior years the cookhouse was over-run with police from other parts of the city. They were experts at crashing. Instead of coming through the front door they would come in from the kitchen or try to "sidewall." The detail was given one meal each day. All the men, except for a skeleton crew, had to be at the cookhouse promptly at 3:00 p.m.

All the waiters and coffee boys on the performers side of the dining tent would pitch in to serve the police and get them out so the tables would be ready for the regular folks. The police were not allowed to sit around and chew the fat. As soon as a man finished his meal the dishes were taken from his place and returned to the dish room and replaced with a clean setting. The head waiter would sit the police at tables not to be used until late, such as the wild west, candy butchers, flying acts, clowns and perhaps the ballet girls' table.

Through the years it seemed a majority of the special detail of Philadelphia police had more rackets than some of the circus people. Believe it or not, I knew for sure that at least three of the police were bootlegging. They had a special belt that held 15 or 20 "nips." Others parked cars on all the streets leading toward the main entrance of the circus. Others were experts at "sidewalling" cash customers. This was especially true on turn-away nights. They could ask almost any price and it would gladly be paid. Very seldom would they ask \$2 a head. It was mostly more, depending on the customer and how anxious they were to see the circus. On the last day in Philadelphia, being Saturday, we had no more than had the the dining tent on the ground, getting ready to roll and sack the canvas when lo and behold the police were using our lot to park cars for the night performance. They collected \$1 per car.

The last meal in Philadelphia for the special police detail was dinner on Saturday. As the police finished their meal a cigar box was passed up and down each table. It was a standing procedure with the police that each man would chip in one dollar as a tip







The Ringling-Barnum cookhouse steam boiler wagon in the early 1920s. Pfening Archives.

and good will gesture for the good meals and service rendered.

I do not know if it was suppose to be a joke or meant for real, but as the box was passed to the last table next to the side wall of the dining tent all of a sudden the box disappeared as if by magic. I forget the name of the officer in charge. When he was told of what happened he promptly made an announcement at the table that if the box was not promptly returned there would be hell to pay. Each and every policeman on detail would have to ante up the amount lost. A short while later the box was returned by a native.

The money received from the police each year would go in a "kitty" to be spent on different projects. One year they purchased an Atwater-Kent battery radio. At the time the radio cost about \$150. The difference was chipped in by the cookhouse crew. Another year baseball uniforms were bought with the tip money.

### My First Cookhouse

In the spring of 1937 I was working at a Great Lakes steel mill in Ecorse, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. It was my second year off the road. I felt sure I had it made and would never travel any more. No more ups and downs. No more heat waves. No more getting out in the rain putting up a cookhouse. No more storms or being chilled to the bone during the spring and late fall on a circus.

I was getting ready for the afternoon shift at the mill when there was a knock at the door. I opened it and there was a messenger boy with a telegram. It was more like a book, I never counted the words. It covered two whole pages.

The wire was from Fred Beckmann of the Beckmann and Gerety carnival. At the time this was one of the larger carnivals, traveling on their own train.

The show was playing the big fair circuit in the middle west.

Beckmann wanted to know if I was interested in operating the circus style cookhouse on his carnival. He said I had been recommended by Teddy Webb, who at the time was operating a frozen custard machine. Teddy was the son of the late Ollie Webb, a steward on

the Ringling Bros. and Ringling-Barnum.

Beckmann explained every detail of the cookhouse operation. I was to answer one way or the other. I called the mill and advised that I would be absent from work. I then telephoned an answer to Western Union. I left for St. Louis the next day.

At the time I had put in nearly twenty years in circus cookhouses. However, I had not been a steward.

I arrived in St. Louis late the next day. After reaching the show grounds I was taken to the cookhouse and introduced to the crew that would be in my employ. At the time I did not know if the men would stay or all walk out on me when I took over as steward.

Ollie "Laughing" Davis, the former steward, had just quit. As the top banana at the cookhouse I knew I was in for a hard row to hoe following Davis. After the introductions I called the chef aside. We had a long chat.

I had a hunch that he thought he should have been given the job. I was right. He admitted he felt he was entitled to the job, but he said he would gladly stay on as chef for the remainder of the season. He said he would give me any help that was needed. I thanked him for his cooperation and told him to go ahead and do as he had been doing for Davis. I told him I was going to stay on the sidelines for the remainder of the week. I wanted to watch the operation, get acquainted with the personnel of the carnival. I never let on that I did not know how to boil water without burning it.

The carnival showed in St. Louis for two weeks. The grounds were in the black section of town. They had two weeks of big business. After supper was served the last day in St. Louis the trash wagon came over to pick up the paper boxes and dry trash that had accumulated during the two weeks. I called the men, including the chef to help load

the wagon. The chef and three other men refused to help. So I wrote out pink pay-off slips for all four. I took them over to the office wagon where they received their pay in full. When Mr. Beckmann heard about the walk-out he sent some ride men to help finish loading the wagon.

Beckmann and Gerety had a dining car on the train that was only used on the "run" to feed the personnel enroute from one town to another. The car previously had been the private car of Harry Lauder, the Scottish balladeer and composer, who had used it during his many tours of the United States.

I had fed the last meal on the lot before the walk-out so there was plenty of time to have the car ready for Sunday breakfast. Before leaving the lot I hired four men to work extra on the run in the dining car. In the meantime Beckmann had located a cook to help on the run.

During the 1930s help was easy to come by, especially around any show ground. It held good in the next town. With the cook I already had I was able to have a full crew before the cookhouse wagon arrived on the show grounds. Observing the cookhouse operation the prior week in St. Louis paid off double. Even with a new raw crew my first meal went off with a bang. From there on I had it made.

Fred Beckmann was the grand old man of the outdoor show world. He had spent the greater part of his life with circuses, wild west shows and carnivals. In 1913 he and Edward Arlington operated the Oklahoma Ranch wild west show.

Col. Fred Beckmann, wild west and carnival owner. Pfening Archives.







Beckmann & Gerety coaches in 1937. Pfening Archives.

During a conversation on the lot one day he told me the reason why he had a circus style cookhouse on his show. He said the ride boys, train hands and other workingmen and some of the bosses never had a dollar bill in their pocket from one day to the other. Each day they could make a draw on their weekly pay check, and at the end of the week they were lucky to have a dollar or two remaining in the office wagon when they drew their check. He went on to say how tough it was for the ride hands to tear down nights and set up at the next stand with all the pig iron on different rides. The work was hard and the men could not do this sort of work living on cold sandwiches with wine or whiskey for a chaser. This was the main reason for a circus-style cookhouse.

Each day the men were given a strip of three meal tickets, for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The tickets were dated and were used as stated on each ticket. The strip of tickets cost the men one dollar each day. It taken out of their pay at the end of the week. I always provided plenty of food. The men pitched till they were full. With the exception of a few meat items they could eat as much food as they wanted. But they could not take any food from the tables. Even during the depression years a dollar a day for three meals did not cover the cost of the food, let alone cover the pay roll for the cookhouse help and wear and tear on the equipment.

I have operated numerous cookhouses since Beckmann & Gerety. However, I must say their cookhouse day in and day out had the best selection of food. Breakfast was a set menu with a choice of fruit juices, hot or cold cereals, a choice of bacon, sausage, ham or pork chops, a choice of hot cakes, French toast or hot biscuits, plus fried or boiled potatoes. The main dish was eggs. They could have all the eggs they wanted. The only meat that was rationed was pork chops, they were allowed two large chops each. Lunch and dinner changed each day.

It was only a short time until I caught up with the men giving their breakfast meal ticket to some of the ladies in the girl show. The men were

too tired or lazy to eat breakfast. To win favors they would pass their tickets to their favorite girl to use for the dinner meal. I put stop to that coniving pronto. As expected I had a big stink from some of the men. Their main gripe was they paid one dollar for the three tickets and they were entitled to do as they wanted with all meal tickets and give them to anyone they wanted.

After supper the evening the girls showed up I went over to the office wagon and waited for Beckmann. He always had dinner in his private Pullman car. He no more than hit the show grounds than I had him button holed. I poured out my troubles. He agreed with all I told him and said I was right. He said he would have a notice placed in the marquee of the cookhouse the next morning. The notice stated meal tickets would only be honored for meals designated and for that meal and date only.

That evening we almost had a Hey Rube. Some of the sore headed ride men were waiting for me to come out of the cookhouse after we had put everything away for the day. I was tipped off as to what was going on, so I sent word to Beckmann. In no time at all the outside of the cookhouse was surrounded by ride foreman and workingmen. A few heads were bruised in the shuffle. Some were herded to the office wagon and paid off. That was the end to the meal ticket problem. I never had any more complaints.

#### Cherry Pie In 1943

During the winter of 1942-1943 there was serious concern if Big Bertha would go on the road in the spring. Wartime barriers coupled with a traumatic change in management created difficulties. Robert, Aubrey and Mrs. Charles Ringling assumed control of the circus from John Ringling North. George W. Smith was the new manager.

Co-operating with the Office of Defence Transportation the show agreed to cut the miles traveled in half, playing fewer towns by lengthening the engagements.

All circus railroad moves were slow. The other rail circuses were affected, but not as much as the Big One. Ring-

ling-Barnum moves were complicated by having three sections, compared the other shows moving in one section.

The circus had begun to feel the pinch caused by the war in 1942. Even though the number of cars were cut in 1943 the rail movements were tough. Many one day stands became two, three and four day engagements.

The show trains were frequently placed on a side track to clear the main line for priority trains with troops and material. At times the railroads did not have the engines to move our three sections. There were times when we had the same crew day after day, as long as we did not transfer to another line. It was not unusual to schedule a full day for a move.

The Philadelphia stand closed on June 12 and the following Washington D.C. stand did not start until June 14. It took two days to get from Baltimore, Maryland to Wilmington, Delaware. When the circus did move overnight it would be a night show only due to an expected late arrival. The final performance in Chicago on September 4 was an afternoon only, allowing it to move to Milwaukee on the 5th where two shows were given. The circus played Atlanta, Georgia on October 18-20. From that stand until it closed in Tampa on November 6 it moved every day and gave two performances in each city.

George Blood was superintendent of the cookhouse on the big show in 1943. Archie Blood, Charles Landt and I were his assistants. The cookhouse department had sixty-five men. This was about a third less than in 1942. The 1943 route book stated that 4,300 meals were served each day.

Due to the war fifteen less cars were used than in 1942. In 1943 Big Bertha moved on seventy-five cars, one advance car, forty-two flats, ten stocks and twenty-two sleepers.

The circus moved in three sections instead of the usual four. The first section did not leave town until all of the equipment was off the lot.

A large number of two and three day stands were played. Because of the shortage of workingmen all departments doubled in brass. On moving night the ring stock and elephants would be taken to the train and loaded in the stock cars. The men that wanted to work on the the big top would be transported back to the show grounds. If any of the baggage stock men wanted to earn extra money they came along.

The side show and wardrobe men would come to the big top after they had their equipment loaded. The can-



dy butchers also jumped in and did their share of the work,

The cookhouse crew was handed over to me. Each moving night my men would take down the back end blues and load the jacks, stringers and planks into the wagons. When the big tent was dropped my men would help unlance the canvas and roll up our section of the canvas.

That is where the "Cherry Pie" money came to life. All the extra men were moonlighting. After each department finished their part of the work at night they lined up near the personnel bus that took them back to the sleeping cars. It was at that time that Ed Kelly, assistant to the general manager, came over and doled out two dollars to each man that had worked. He always gave me five dollars. None of the extra "Cherry Pie" cash showed up on the circus payroll records. I guess it was called spot labor.

The management did everything necessary to keep the show moving. They were successful; we made a full season, closing in Tampa on November 6.

During the entire season I never ventured near the big top when they were putting it up. More than likely they would have put me to work. Manpower was very low. The show sent men ahead of the circus to hire workers. At times they would round up as many as a hundred men. The next morning the show was lucky to have twenty of the hundred show up. The girls and performers also helped by lining up the yellow grandstand chairs.

The ushers removed the chairs from the chair wagons and carried them up the bibles and unfolded them. At night they sloughed the chairs and reloaded them. This was hard work and few ushers offered to help out in other departments. They had picked up extra cash by selling extra chairs and taking general admission customers up to "saved" top rows of the blues.

During the spring one of the sleeping cars was converted into a lunch stand. It had a typical pie car layout. It had one long partitioned counter with a large coffee urn. The car was only open while the train moved from one town to the next. The only show folk allowed in the car were the workingmen and extra helpers that moved the show off the lot. Sandwiches, fruit, cakes and doughnuts were offered free. This was an added incentive for the men to opt for "Cherry Pie."

#### **Ringling-Barnum's First and Last Pit Show.**

The season of 1919 on the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

was a hardship for staff members, superintendents of the various departments and assistants. The workingmen, the band and performers were not affected.

When the Barnum & Bailey and the Ringling Bros. Circus combined during the fall and winter of 1918, many a department head was shuffled. Some would not take an assistantship or a lower paying position, others had no choice but to accept a lower paying job.

John and Charles Ringling must be given credit for trying to keep the big family of faithful employees together. Some of their top men had to be placed in other departments. Of all the changes in personnel that took place that winter in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the brothers Ringling could not come to an agreement on the side show.

Clyde Ingalls had operated the side show on the Barnum show while Lew Graham had operated it on Ringling. Both men were richly endowed with strong vocal cords; they were talented big show announcers, every word they uttered was clear and distinct. As either man stepped from the band stand and approached the center ring curb a hush would go over the crowd; then the drums would give out a roll, the lights would dim, then the announcer would step on to the ring curb, raise his hand for quiet, the hush was intense. Talking in a natural voice Graham or Ingalls would start his spiel with l-a-d-i-e-s and g-e-n-t-l-e-m-e-n, each word came out clear and could be heard at each end of the huge big top. Neither ever used a megaphone. To this writer's knowledge 1919 was the only year that the Ringling brothers ever had a pit show on either the Barnum or Ringling show.

It was roughly 130 feet in length and about twenty feet wide. The front side wall was always kept rolled up, except for bad weather. The main reason was so that the folks awaiting for the circus doors to open could look inside, not that anything was going on.

In the side show all the freaks and human oddities were shown to the public on raised platforms. That way every person had to look up to see what the lecturer was explaining to the paying customers.



Some of the banners of the Ringling-Barnum pit show. Pfening Archives.

In the pit show they had box-like stalls about five feet high, so that the spectators would have to look down into the "pit" to see what was taking place. The outside of the enclosures could be covered with colored canvas, some had canvas also on the inside. The entire front was kept open, netting about four feet high was tied off to the front side poles, except two openings for the folks to enter and exit.

As in the main side show there was a lecturer. Starting at one end of the tent he would give a short talk at each "pit," at times he would sell photos of the freaks or oddities, getting a cut of the money.

The usual run of attractions at that time could have been the skeleton dude, either a fat boy or girl, a tattooed man or woman, cigarette fiend, midgets, snake trainer, fire eater, knife thrower, a seal boy and others too numerous to mention, the list was to give you an idea what the folks would see if they purchased a ticket to the "pit" show.

Lew Graham was given the nod to operate the big circus side show. Clyde Ingalls received the nod to operate the pit show. In 1920 there was only the big side show on the midway. Ingalls was the manager, and Graham disappeared completely from the circus.



1895

Life was difficult for small shows roaming around the mid-west in 1895, and although their "nut" was low, it was, perhaps, harder to meet than the huge operating expenses of Barnum & Bailey. Their limited seating and low prices deprived them of adequate advertising, which, in turn, produced small audiences and small income. It was for most "mud" shows a hand to mouth existence, but every showman lived by his optimism. Every showman believed the next town would be a winner and the certainty that tomorrow would bring a straw house.

In 1895 one of the smallest billed Mound City, Kansas, for August 5. The *Linn County Republic* on August 2, announced the coming of Hurlburt & Cahoon's Combined Shows. The *Republic* carried no display advertisement, but ran a few statements in the news columns at a rate that was usually ten cents a line or less in the country newspapers.

"Mound City is to have a big day, Monday, August 5th, when Hurlburt & Cahoon's (sic) shows are here.

"Monday, August 5th, is the date of Hurlburt & Calhoon's shows at Mound City.

"Hurlburt & Calhoon's Show at Mound City, August 5th.

"See the balloon ascension at Mound City, August 5th, with Hurlburt & Calhoon's shows."

Hurlburt and Cahoon spent less than a dollar on newspaper advertising.

After the advertising had whipped the public to a frenzy of anticipation, the *Republic* regretted to inform its readers that, "The circus failed to show up here as advertised Monday. They were so poorly patronized at Pleasanton, that they thought it best not to proceed further on the route, and shipped their effects to Kansas City Saturday night."

The show surfaced at Moline for a two-day stand, Friday and Saturday, October 4 and 5. The *Moline Republican* on October 4 carried a poor two-column ad.

On another page, "Hurlburt & Cahoon's combined shows are a success. The trained horses and dogs, are worth the price of admission, and the specialties are 'out of sight.'"

There was an extra added attraction after the Saturday night show. "Remember the dance at the opera house Saturday night. It will commence immediately at

# ONLY BIG SHOW COMING Beyond the Reach of Jealous Rivals

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BY ORIN COPPLE KING

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the close of the show. There will be five pieces in the orchestra and a first class time is assured."

Nothing worked.

"The dance Saturday night was not numerous attended but was a success all the same.

"The Hurlburt & Cahoon show did not succeed here from a financial standpoint. The show is all right and well worth the cost of attending it but the managers do not seem to be on to their job in the matter of properly advertising themselves."

With less fanfare than displayed at Moline, Hurlburt & Cahoon played Burden.

"Crown Prince, the talking horse, at the Lyceum Friday and Saturday night, 11th and 12th [October]," according to the *Burden Eagle*. "Don't fail to see him."

"The advance man for the Hurlburt & Cahoon horse show did not make a date with the Grand in this city," the Win-

This Hurlburt ad appeared in the October 4, 1895 *Molene Republican*. Kansas State Historical Society.



At Opera House To-night and Saturday night. Matinee Saturday afternoon at 2 o'clock. Seats on sale at Elting's Drug Store.

field *Courier* reported October 9. "His show was not quite up to Capt. Myers' idea of what a show of that kind ought to be and on that account refused to book them."

The manager of Manning's Hall, Winfield, did welcome Hurlburt & Cahoon and scheduled them for Tuesday through Friday, October 15 to 18.

The Winfield *Sentinel* on the last day of the run carried two handouts.

"Hurlburt & Cohoon's (sic) circus spent Sunday in Nashua, and gave two performances on

Monday. Rain prevented many from attending who had a great desire to see the splendidly trained animals. Those who witnessed the performance were more than pleased. The beautiful horses and dogs are completely under Mr. Cohoon's control, and as he is an ideal ringmaster, kind, pleasant and thorough, the show is a delight to all lovers of animals.-- Nashua Reporter."

Nashua, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Pennsylvania or New Hampshire? But not Kansas, for Kansas had so such town.

"Hurlburt & Cohoon's (sic) trained animal show came to Brookfield last Tuesday to entertain animal fanciers for a day, and they surely did it. The important feature of the circus was the horses, a herd of ten animals that do everything but talk. In a manner bright, intelligent and witty they obey the every command of their master, Mr. Cohoon (sic). They are veritable beauties and it will be a long time before Brookfield will have the pleasure of seeing the performance of such phenomenal wonders.--Brookfield News."

But not Brookfield, Kansas, for it had no newspaper.

"The Hurburt (sic) & Cahoon horse and dog show came over from Burden this morning [October 15]," the Winfield *Courier* reported, "and will show at Manning's hall tonight and Wednesday night. The Sunflower band, for whose benefit the show is given will furnish the music which of itself will be a drawing card.

"Reserved seats are now on sale at Plagmann & Doane's at 35 cents. General admission 25 cents."

After the first night the *Courier* reported that, "The attendance at the horse show at Manning's hall last night was not what the merits of the entertainment entitled it to. By an arrangement with the company



the Sunflower band is interested in the success of the show and this, together with the fact that the entertainment is first class in every respect and well worth the price of admission should give them a crowded house tonight. Mr. Cahoon has some of the finest looking and best educated horses that ever showed in the west and the antics of the educated dogs are no less interesting. 'Prince' was the favorite horse and his intelligence was astonishing. He could do almost everything but talk and he probably did that if the audience could only have understood him. Headed by the band they gave a very creditable parade yesterday afternoon, which was repeated today. School children are admitted for 15 cents."

The performance of October 17, according to the *Courier*, "was a very satisfactory entertainment. A more beautiful group of horses was never on exhibition than those on the stage last night. The pyramid of four snow white horses was a perfect picture of beauty. The performance showed to what extent the horse can be educated and their various acts and attitudes would give one the impression that they were possessed of almost human intelligence. The educated dogs performed many new and amusing tricks. The trapeze and Spanish rings was one of the features of the evening and the performance closed by the grand military drill by twelve horses."

In opposition to Hurlburt & Cahoon was the medicine show of Drs. Yellowstone and Stewart which provided nightly free shows and gave free examinations in the afternoon.

More formidable competition was provided by the Great Syndicate Shows which exhibited in Winfield on October 18.

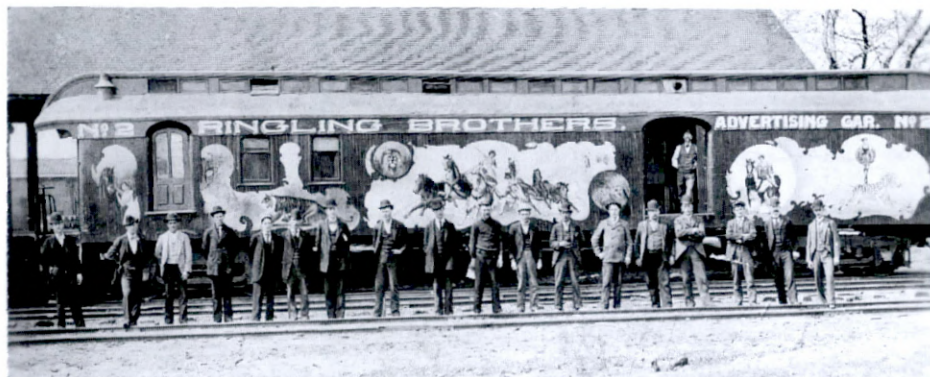
The *Courier's* last word on Hurlburt & Cahoon was, "The horse show played to a crowded house last night and left today for Oklahoma."

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Mound City in 1895 fared poorly in the circus business. Hurlburt & Cahoon failed to appear as promised. Russell's Combined Shows was also a disappointment to the circus goers of Mound City.

The show billed the town for a two-day stand, Thursday and Friday, September 12 and 13. The *Linn County Republic* reported the story on September 20.

"A 'crowd' known as Russell's combined shows struck town Thursday and pitched their tents north east of the school house. They did not give any performance in the afternoon, but attempted to in the evening, when one of



their 'reserved seats' broke and let quite a number to the ground in a hurry. One lady, Mrs. M. C. Dolson, sustained a sprained wrist, and a few others were bruised. A stampede then took place and every body rushed out side, so no performance was given. So to make up for it they exhibited Friday afternoon and evening, but those who attended won't own up to it so we don't know what kind of a 'show' it was."

Russell's Combined Shows, according to the *Colony Free Press*, September 27, appeared in that town on an unknown date in September. After quoting in full the account published in the *Linn County Republic*, the *Free Press* reported the further adventures of Russell's ill-fated aggregation.

"The same show struck here last week but did not exhibit. They spent two days quarreling and wrangling with each other. The showmen demanded their pay before proceeding with the circus, making it no pay no play their motto. The boss was obdurate, and a grand break up was the consequence. The manager moved on to hunt new actors, and the actors began to look around for somebody with capital to invest in the circus business. George Harris of Colony thought this a golden opportunity to multiply a few loose shekels many fold. He left with his show, Saturday. We are expecting to see some big posters bearing, in four foot letters, some such announcement: Harris' Colossal Aggrandisement of Gigantic Animals and Mammoth Acrobatic Wonders."

Harris and Russell both disappeared from the Kansas press.

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Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows in 1895 had an excellent press department supplied with 22 different handouts used extensively in the eight dates played in Kansas. Newspapers carried 24 advertisements using 16 different cuts. The illustrations covered a wide range of features. The Landauer Troupe of nine members with their statuary posing was the most used, appearing seven times. An equestrienne

Ringling Bros. advance car No. 2 with crew in 1895. Pfening Archives.

standing beside her horse ran six times. Other illustrations used in Kansas were: Three mounted equestriennes, five times; Da Comas, three; three men standing by horses, three; hippopotamus and hunter, three; standing Roman racers, two; Japanese troupe, two; giraffe wagon, two; giraffe, one; hippopotamus, one; bareback rider, one; standing equestrienne Roman racers, one; dog races, one; Eddy family, one.

Two German language newspapers, one in Atchison, one in Wichita, both carried a cut of performing pigs which was not used in other papers.

Advance publicity was handled by three advertising cars. Car No. 1 usually papered a town three weeks ahead of show day. Car No. 1 appeared in Wichita on September 7 heralding the exhibitions of September 28.

Car No. 1 was in Arkansas City September 9 for the performances there on September 30. "W. S. Coxey, advertising agent for the Ringling circus, called yesterday morning," according to the *Canal City Dispatch*, Arkansas City. "He is a pleasant gentleman to do business with. 'The greatest show on earth' is well advertised in this 'neck o'woods.'"

The *Arkansas City Daily Traveler* reported September 16, that, "Ringling Bros. advertising car No. 2 is in the city. H. W. Randle has charge of it. The boys will bill all the towns below us to Guthrie and Oklahoma City, and north to Wichita. East and west they bill Wellington, Winfield, Cedarville and other towns of any importance. The circus will bring many people here and the people will leave money in the town. It is a good thing."

The *El Dorado Daily Republican* on September 13, acknowledged the presence of car No. 2. Car No. 3 "came in from the east" on September 19.

"Heavy rains of last week damaged Ringling Bros. show bills to a consid-



erable extent," the *Iola Friend-Herald* reported. "Bill posters arrived and repaired the damage Saturday [September 14]."

It was not always practicable to wait for the arrival of an advertising car. Walter L. Main's Grandest and Best Shows billed Pittsburg for Wednesday, September 4. The *Daily Headlight* noted that Ringling's "special agent [was] sent ahead to get in before the Main's show day." Ringling scheduled Pittsburg for Wednesday, October 2.

When billing the area around Pittsburg, the Ringling paste brigade leased a large billboard in Frontenac, Kansas. The *Headlight* reported, October 3, that, "Yesterday afternoon through O. T. Boaz, their attorney, a suit was issued against the Ringling Brothers circus by Ethel Angel by her next friend Ephraim Angel, Pearl Applegate, by her next friend Wayne Applegate, and Annie Early, by her next friend Andrew Early, for alleged damages sustained by the falling of bill boards located in Frontenac, and leased by the Ringling's. Morris Cliggett appeared for the defendants and gave a redelivery bond and the sheriff was ordered to return the attachments without service. Here the matter rests. The bill boards were only leased by the Ringling Brothers. It looks as if it will be difficult to stick the Ringling Brothers for damages. The three plaintiffs in the action are children, and along with others of about their own age were looking at the pictures when a hard wind which was blowing at the time blew the boards down and the little girls were caught under the wreck."

The incident was described at the time of its occurrence by the following account from the September 5 *Headlight*: "The bill boards put up by the bill posting company of Pittsburg, fell yesterday and injured several children. The children were playing in front of the bill boards which are one hundred feet long and eleven feet high and some of them were looking at the pictures on the bills when the strong wind coming from the south pulled the stakes holding the braces and the boards fell catching three of the children. Mr. Early's nine year old child receiving a broken limb. Mr. Applegate's girl received an injured foot possibly some broken bones, and Eph Angell's child some injuries, but your correspondent did not learn to what extent. There will be a case of damage against some one. Mr. Earley's child is hurt inwardly and may amount to something serious. Your correspon-



Giraffe illustration from a 1895 Ringling courier. Pfening Archives.

dent was watching them putting up the boards and it was a frail affair. The stakes holding the braces which supported the boards was not driven in the ground to exceed twelve inches."

Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows billed Atchison for exhibitions on September 13. It was the first time the show had ever appeared in the city. An advertisement in the *Atchison Weekly Patriot*, August 31, told the people what to expect. "Coming to Atchison, September 13.

"RINGLING BROS. WORLD'S GREATEST SHOWS. Beyond All Comparison the Largest, Grandest and Most Complete Exhibition on Earth

"Three-Ring Circus--Thrilling Roman Hippodrome--Millionaire Menagerie, Aquarium of Marine Wonders. Far-Famed Horse Fair--Embracing 400 of the Finest Blooded Horses in the World, together with the Greatest Aggregation of European Aerialists, Gymnasts, Acrobats, Riders, and other Arenic Celebrities of every description ever exhibited in this or any other Country.

"LIBERTAS SUPERB BAND OF SIXTY SOLOISTS.

"A New and Glorious Musical Feature, Gratuitously Offered to the Public

"An Hour of Entrancing Music as a Prelude to Every Performance.

"Stupendous Revival of the Circus Maximus.

"Terrific Gladiatorial Combats, Absorbing Trials of Strength and En-

durance. Grand Gala Day Sports and Spectacle.

"TWO AND FOUR HORSE CHARIOT RACES

"Roman Standing Races and other Exciting Racing Contests.

"Four Mammoth Railroad Trains--1000 People.

"More High Salaried Performers and More Novel Features. Than any Two Other Shows, all Exhibited under the Largest Tents ever Constructed. THE DA COMAS, The Greatest of all Aerial Vaulters.

"FAMOUS EDDY FAMILY. The Absolute Perfection of Acrobatics.

"LANDAUER TROUPE. Nine Flexible Models in Classic Statuary.

"ALL THE WORLD'S GREATEST BAREBACK RIDERS. Mike Rooney, Orrin Hollis, Cecile Lowande, Edward Shipp, Wm. De Van, Daniel Leon, Mlle Elena, Julia Lowande, Marian Leslie.

"Akimoto's Troupe of Japanese Equilibrists.

"Most Complete Zoological Collection in the World.

"LARGEST LIVING GIRAFFE, MONSTER HIPPOPOTAMUS. Stands Fully Eighteen Feet. The Mightiest Amphibian in Height on Earth.

"Mammoth Bi-Horned Gnu; 100 Dens. Lairs and Cages of Rare Wild Beasts; Schools of Educated Goats and Ponies, Mirth-Making Porcine Circus; High-Bred Horses in Astounding Drills; Double Herds of Ponderous, Performing, Dancing and Clown Elephants.

"FREE DAILY STREET PARADE Leaves the Show Grounds Promptly at 10 o'clock on the Morning of the Exhibition. Over a Mile in Length. Scores of Magnificently Carved and Decorated Dens of Wild Animals Exhibited Free and Open upon the Streets. Ten Kinds of Music. Moscow's Silver Chimes. No postponement on account of weather. The procession moves rain or shine.

"Two Complete Performances Daily Afternoon at 2--Night at 8. Doors Open One Hour Earlier.

"ONE 50 CENT TICKET ADMITS TO ALL THE COMBINED SHOWS. CHILDREN UNDER 12, HALF PRICE.

"Special Excursion Rates on All Railroads.

"Will Positively Exhibit In ATCHISON, SEPTEMBER 13."

One of the important duties of an advance agent is to get the license reduced no matter how small the fee demanded. The *Atchison Daily Globe*, August 26, reported that, "Ringling Bros. agent kicked on the price, but finally agreed to pay the city \$75 for the



privilege of giving their show here."

The first handout appeared in the August 29 *Weekly Champion* and dealt in generalities boasting that the show was "the largest combined circus, menagerie and hippodrome ever organized." The show promised "the largest and most magnificent procession ever seen on the streets of this city. Not only will there be more elephants, more open dens of performing wild beasts and more beautifully caparisoned high-bred horses exhibited free upon the public thoroughfares, but there will also be shown a gorgeous golden reproduction of Moscow's Kremlin Tower, with its chime of sweet-toned silver bells; a great golden caliope, with its steam-wrought melodies; ten grand military bands and other kinds of music, and a mile and more of the largest, finest and most beautifully ornate cages and massive golden chariots than have ever been seen in a street display in this city. All this will be but preliminary to the most extensive exhibition ever seen under canvas, displayed under the largest tent ever erected, and so constructed as to be absolutely impervious to the elements.

"A striking innovation introduced by the management this year is a grand musical festival, beginning one hour before each performance, by Liberati's famous military band of 60 soloists. There is no additional charge for this great musical feature. Incidentally it may be mentioned that Ringling Bros. big circus performance is never abridged and that the night is given in every particular and with the same minute detail as in the afternoon. This is a feature that cannot be too heartily commended. Another notable feature is the entire absence of disreputable characters on Ringling day. The management of this great show will not permit any gambling of any character in or near their exhibition grounds, and all who attend their grand performances are assured of protection from the sharpers, and courteous treatment from the attaches of the show."

A story concerning elephants was published in the *Weekly Patriot*, August 31. "THE ELEPHANT'S TUSKS.

"Some Interesting Facts About the Ivory They Furnish.

"Strictly speaking, ivory is equivalent to dentine, the hard substance

of which most teeth chiefly consist; but as commonly accepted, ivory means the dentine of those teeth that are large enough to be of use for industrial purposes, such as the tusks of the elephant, the narwhal, the hippopotamus, the walrus and the sperm whale. The tusks of the elephant are a pair of upper incisor teeth, which often grow to an enormous size. The extinct mammoths possessed the largest tusks. The African species have the largest teeth of any of the recent elephants. Among the many curiosities to be seen at the London exhibition of 1851, was a pair of African tusks that measured eight feet and six inches in length and twenty-two inches in circumference, and together weighed 325 pounds. The average weight, however, of the African tusks is from twenty to fifty pounds. Captive elephants usually have their tusks shortened, and the ends bound with metal to keep them from splitting, but the tusks continue to grow by reason of the conversion of vascular pulp into ivory, and the shortening operation has to be repeated at intervals. The value of ivory depends upon the size of the tusks; those weighing less than six pounds are not worth more than half the price per pound of really fine tusks. The tusks of the narwhal and the walrus, the teeth of the sperm whales, the ear bones of whales, and the molar teeth of the elephant are all made use of as sources of ivory, though they are not so valuable as the larger tusks. The best and finest quality comes from equatorial Africa. It is much closer in grain than Indian ivory, and has less tendency to become yellow when exposed. It is semi-transparent and of a warm color when first cut, and in this

The Liberati concert band as depicted in a 1895 Ringling Bros. courier. Pfening Archives.

state it is called 'green' ivory; as the water dries out of it, it becomes much lighter in color and more opaque."

A handout in the *Patriot* proclaimed that the menagerie embraced the "largest collection of wild animals ever brought to this country." Featured was a giraffe "over eighteen feet high;" a four-ton hippopotamus, "the only blood exuding behemoth now in this country." Other animals mentioned were the bi-horned gnu, a pair of ibexis, zebras, sacred cattle, llamas of a dozen species, lions, tigers, leopards, hyenas, kangaroos, a drove of camels, two herds of elephants, and two baby elephants.

The aerialists were the subject of a handout in the September 5 *Weekly Champion*. Emphasis was on the DaComas Troupe, "one gentleman and two ladies" who "actually fly through space, turning single and double somersaults in mid-air, and never failing to catch each other at the critical moment of descent."

Other aerialists mentioned were Maynard and LaMothe, on bars; and Art and Millie Adair "on the lofty trapeze."

Two handouts were carried by the *Champion* the day before the exhibitions. One was devoted to Liberati's band of 60 pieces which played a one-hour concert before each performance. The other proclaimed what a great day tomorrow would be.

The *Globe* printed Liberati's program for the evening performance:

- "1. Grand Selection from 'Cavaleria Rusticana' Mascagni
- "2. Waltz--Ma Belle Ado Roy
- "3. Overture--Fingal's Cave Mendelssohn
- "4. Cornet solo Sig. A. Liberati
- "5. Remembrances of Tannhauser Wagner"

Liberati did not play during the exhibitions and his band did not appear in the parade. The *Globe* reported that on September 20, Liberati and 18 of his men would leave the show.

The *Champion* announced on the 12th that Police Chief Selp would appoint ten female detectives to assist on show day. "They will be dressed the same as other ladies and will be known only to the police force. They will do duty from early in the forenoon on the streets and show grounds until the close of the show at night."







On show day the *Champion* ran the following: "This is circus day and the whole town should take a holiday. Ever since the days of John A. Martin THE CHAMPION has made it a custom to allow its employes to go to the circus when it comes to town and we will go today as usual. There is nothing that renews youth and recalls the pleasant memories of days gone by as does the old time circus. The circus is an old thing on earth but there will never be a time when people will not gladly go to see one. The attraction today is the Mammoth Ringling Brothers' circus, which will take place on the old show grounds, corner of Twelfth and Santa Fe streets. Everybody will want to hear the famous Liberati band, which gives a concert before each performance, and see the greatest show on earth. The Tenth street cars will take you within two blocks of the show grounds."

On show day the *Globe* had several circus references: "The chief did not appoint any women as detectives.

"Lock up your houses securely if you go to the circus tonight. The police say there are a number of suspicious strangers in town.

"They claim the circus ground in Atchison is the worst they ever struck.

"Circus men say that hot weather like this hurts their business as much as a rain storm.

"The big summer cars were run on the Tenth street line to-day, as a tribute to the circus.

"Dr. Harrison was called to treat several of the circus horses to-day.

"There was a couple on the street holding hands before eight o'clock this morning.

"This has been a very quiet day around the police station. No crookedness has been reported and every one seems orderly.

"Judge Webb adjourned the district court for an hour this morning to give the jury a chance to see the circus parade. The school superintendent should have been equally thoughtful of the children.

A group of Ringling baggage wagons on a lot in 1895. Pfening Archives.

"Dr. Shelley sewed up a large gash in the head of a circus employee to-day. Another employee hit him with a crowbar."

Concerning the parade, the *Globe* reported that, "Atchison people did not realize until this morning, when the Ringling parade appeared, that the Ringling circus is the largest on the road this year. The circus is new here, and while THE GLOBE has been trying to impress upon the people that the show is the rival of Barnum's, they thought it the usual circus advertising. But when the parade appeared, it began to dawn upon the people that the greatest show on earth had struck town. The parade was much the largest seen in Atchison, and the most attractive in every way. A novel feature was ten swell drags occupied by the principal performers. The chime of bells was also new, and in every respect the parade was a notable one, and a pleasant surprise. The crowd on the street was not as large as usual, possibly owing to the excessively hot weather. A great many people are also waiting for the Corn Carnival. A peculiar thing during the parade was to see members of Liberati's band scattered about. The members of the big band do not play in the circus procession."

The day after the exhibitions the *Globe* still had much to say: "This has been the hottest September in twenty-five years. People went to bed last night with fans in their hands.

"The editor of THE GLOBE took dinner last evening in the circus dining car and was invited to accompany the show for ten days through the south in October and write 'Vacation Notes.'

"Seven street cars stood in line when the circus was over last night, and the people packed them in sardine fashion. Mr. Bendure's efforts in having the cars promptly on time on such an occasion are greatly appreciated.

"People no doubt admired the beautiful and graceful men and women as they performed their feats of daring at the

circus last night, but their admiration would have received a chill, notwithstanding the hot weather, if they had taken a peep at them after the show.

"The general opinion in Atchison today is that Ringling Bros. gave the best circus performance yesterday ever given in the city. The business was light here, owing to the excessively hot weather, and to the fact that the circus was not known here. We suppose the Ringlings will not come again, but they will make a mistake if they come to this conclusion, for Atchison would like a chance to show substantial appreciation of what it considers the best show on earth."

The *Globe* also noted a former Atchison resident, William Newlin, was employed in the menagerie.

The *Champion*, after show day, reported that, "Ringling Brothers' circus that was in Atchison Friday presented the most elaborate and elegant street parade that was ever witnessed in the city. The horses and show animals were monuments of beauty. The chime of bells was a novel feature that enlisted much favorable comment. The deportment of everybody connected with the show was that of a lady or gentleman. While their tent didn't go up like King Solomon's temple without the sound of a hammer, it did go up without any boisterous talk or the use of any profane language. The show taken as a whole was the best ever witnessed in Atchison, and the people connected with it from the proprietors down to the roustabout were the cleanest that ever coached a circus in our city."

In another column, the *Champion* reported a rebellious elephant. "At the circus grounds Friday, while the keeper of the big elephant was trying to get him in place, Jumbo became stubborn and refused to obey commands. The keeper made a thrust at him with his prod and hook, aiming at his ear. The hook missed the ear and caught into the flesh of the overgrown quadruped just above the eye, causing him to yell.



It so incensed the animal that he struck his keeper with his trunk, knocking him about sixteen feet, landing him in a ravine. The keeper was picked up insensible and carried into a tent. It was not learned how seriously he was hurt. Two other keepers went at Jumbo with spears and hooks and made him bellow like a calf. He was got under a tent and placed in chains. After he was chained he was submissive enough to the men who had subdued him, but seemed to be looking all the time for keeper number one who had first attacked him. He seemed to understand that his keeper had insulted him while the other two men had only punished him deservedly. O! thou animal of much sagacity."

Following Atchison Ringling moved on to exhibitions at St. Joseph, Missouri on September 14. The *St. Joseph Weekly Gazette* carried a handout boasting of the famous riders scheduled to appear.

"Mlle Elena, who heads the list of female riders, is the personification of grace and dexterity, and has been justly named 'the queen of the arena.' Nothing more effectively picturesque could be conceived than this petite young girl, endowed by nature with rare beauty of form and feature, dancing and pirouetting upon horseback, or poised upon one dainty foot, seeming to float in air, while the spirited animal beneath her dashes around the arena with the speed of the wind. This beautiful and dashing equestrienne is ably seconded by Julia Lowande and Marian Leslie, whose skill as horsewomen entitle them to a distinct position among great arenic stars. Among the famous somersault riders are: Mike Rooney, one of the youngest but already the greatest of American bareback equestrians; Orrin Hollis, whose somersaults, turned with equal facility, forward or backward, while his horse is running at a high rate of speed, have never been equaled; Cecile Lowande, Edward Shipp, William De Van, Dan Leon, and a number of other riders whose names are well known and popular the world over."

The show played several Missouri dates before returning to Kansas for exhibitions at Iola on September 26. Circus day in Iola was satisfactory to all. The *Friend-Herald* reported that, "About as large a crowd of people as ever thronged the streets of Iola gathered in town last Thursday from adjoining towns and farm homes of this and other counties to witness Ringling Bros. circus, and they were not disappointed in what they saw for the above was the largest and best that has ever visited Iola. Ringling Bros.

take pride in managing a clean show, no fakes were tolerated, and their tent performances were strictly first class in every particular."

A four-column ad ran thirteen times in the *El Dorado Daily Republican* before show day, Friday, September 27. Advertising car No. 2 left El Dorado for Wichita on September 13. Car No. 3 arrived on the 19th. Ringling was having a highly successful season and could not resist bragging about it in a handout used extensively in Kansas and in the *Republican* on September 14. "A REMARKABLE TOUR. Ringling Bros. Great Circus Universally Indorsed."

"Ringling Bros.' World's greatest shows, which exhibit in this city Friday September 27, have had a remarkable tour this year. The season began with a phenomenal engagement in Chicago, during which forty-five consecutive performances were given to audiences aggregating nearly a million people. The show was a revelation to all who witnessed the performance, and the universal verdict was that nothing to compare with it had ever been seen in that city. The conservative *Tribune* declared it was the most satisfactory and complete circus ever seen in Chicago, and every other Chicago newspaper indorsed (sic) this verdict. In St. Louis twelve performances were given to audiences that crowded the immense hippodrome pavilion afternoon and night, and the *Globe-Democrat* of that city voiced the general sentiment when it declared that 'no such evolution of the circus had ever before been seen in St. Louis.'

"Indianapolis and Detroit and oth-

Lithograph of the Nelson Family on Ringling in 1895. Pfening Archives.



er large cities followed in rapid succession, and then came an extensive tour of New York and New England, during which every important city in that section of the country was played to the largest audiences ever attracted by a circus.

"Twelve consecutive performances were given in Boston, and the audiences were so large as to excite wonder even in that notable amusement-loving city. The success of the show was pronounced. No circus that ever exhibited there ever received such an ovation from the public, or such unstinted praise from the newspapers. The *Boston Herald* commended it editorially as the greatest of all American amusement institutions. The *Globe* declared that it was 'the best circus by all odds that ever visited Boston,' and the *Journal* called it the 'best show in existence.' In every other section of the country visited by Ringling Bros. Greatest Circus this year, the verdict has been the same, and no such triumph has ever been known in the history of amusements anywhere. It is evident that such a success as this must be founded on merit. None but a really great exhibition could so thoroughly commend itself to the public. The people of this city will have an opportunity to judge for themselves to what an extent these encomiums have been deserved, for the performance here will be given in every respect the same as during the memorable Chicago, St. Louis and Boston engagements, and there is every reason to believe that the verdict of this city will be a simple repetition of that pronounced by all other cities, that Ringling Brothers' World's Greatest Shows now stand at the head of arenic enterprises in the United States."

The mayor of El Dorado thought fit to warn his people with a letter to the editor of the *Republican*. "Owing to the fact that Ringling Bros. circus will be in our city on Friday, September 27th, and that thieves and confidence men take advantage of a day of this kind to do their work, I would suggest no one leave their premises unlocked or unprotected on that day. The city marshal has been instructed to take every precaution possible for the protection of property. Our police force will not be sufficient to guard every residence at the same moment and you will therefore greatly assist the force by being careful and watchful. Respectfully Submitted, Jno. T. Evans, Mayor."

A short list of "Circus Don'ts" appeared below the mayor's warning.

"Don't forget to take all your children.







Brazilian panther, pair of Bengal tigers, giraffe, Indian leopards, and "a real baby elephant called Singapore because it came from Singapore."

Several individuals from neighboring towns were mentioned in a series of short paragraphs. Cass Friedburg cleverly advertised his store with a banner worn in the parade by an elephant.

After the show had gone the *Republican* had additional comments. "A rare curiosity--a ten year old boy of this city saw an elephant for the first time in his life.

"One of the noticeable features of Ringling Brothers circus was the absence of street fakirs and things (sic) that usually follow a circus.

"The schools were dismissed from 10 a. m. to 1 p. m. to-day.

"So far as known there were no houses looted, pockets picked, or any crooked work whatever here yesterday. Ringling Bros. have a number of detectives with them who co-operate with the local police force of a city to prevent such occurrences. The management of the circus spoke very highly of the arrangements and the efficiency of the police work here.

"More than three hundred people took their meals at the Farmers' Home on circus day. Two hundred pounds of beef was served for dinner and supper and other eatables in proportion to make up good meals."

The *Times*, also, had a few comments: "Quite a number of hard characters were in town yesterday."

"Ladies! Ladies!" said the clown as he drew up on the Tolle corner yesterday, 'If any of you want to kiss me, why here I am!' Everybody thought he was going to make an important announcement."

"A farmer came to town Thursday, and among other purchases, took home some shoes for the children. In the evening he counted his money and found he did not have enough to take the family to the circus. Yesterday he brought the shoes back and asked that his money be refunded. It was done, he and his family saw the show and went home happy. This is a fact."

The *Kansas Staats-Anzeiger* of Atchison which had many subscribers in Wichita and Pittsburg, ran an ad touting the Wichita exhibitions of September 28, and Pittsburg October 2. The ad was in German.

The *Wichita Times* which received no advertising nor handouts from the Ringlings

praised the show in advance of its coming. The editor caught the show in Kansas City and was greatly impressed. On September 21, he wrote, "Ringling's great combination will be in this city September 28. It has been showing in several cities in Kansas and has given entire satisfaction. It was attended by immense crowds in Kansas City and the editor can say he never saw a better show. Liberati's band precedes the grand entree and is a fine attraction. The costumes and caparisons of the horses are rich and brilliant in coloring, while the liveries of grooms are tasty. The gymnastics and acrobatic work is splendid. The DaComa's aerial act is good and the trapeze, perch and ladder acts are first class. Their exhibit of 'living statuary' is a fine feature. The phases of the late war as represented is exceptionally (sic) good. They have finely trained elephants, dogs, pigs, etc. The clowns are an improvement on many of late years. It will be a treat and hours of rich pleasure."

It was an impressive testimony from an editor who received no pay.

The Golden Eagle One-price Clothiers of Wichita announced on the day of the exhibitions that "With every \$10 worth of merchandise and over we present a ticket free to the Ringling Bros. Circus."

The *Wichita Herald*, a German language newspaper, carried two handouts and a two-column ad printed in German.

The *Wichita Daily Eagle* reported, September 29, "WILL WINTER HERE. Ringling Brothers Circus to Spend a Season in Wichita.

"Negotiating for the Burton Car Works and Everbody Hopes They will Complete the Deal as They are the Right Kind of People---They Gave a Show Yesterday that was Never

The DaComas were pictured in this 1895 lithograph printed by the Courier Co. Pfening Archives.

Equalled in the West--Three Special Features Worth More than the Admission--Nearly 20,000 People Visit the Two Performances.

"It is pretty certain that Ringling Brothers circus will winter in this city.

"While here yesterday they went out to see the Burton car works and are now negotiating with a view to renting them for winter quarters.

"If they succeed it will be quite an advantage to Wichita and will cause a great deal of money to be left here as the circus is the largest in the world and will make a big demand on the markets of Wichita, including groceries, hay, corn and meat.

"In six weeks the circus will be ready to turn in for the season.

"Mr. Alf Ringling was seen last night and in conversation on the subject he said that himself and his brothers want to winter in Wichita, that they have a warm spot in their hearts for the Peerless Princess and would like very much to live here if the conditions are satisfactory.

"We saw the car works," he continued, 'and they suit first rate for our purpose. From the present prospects I believe we can make all arrangements satisfactorily to locate our winter quarters here.'

"When it became noised about that the circus would winter here everybody was 'tickled,' not because the circus would help business alone, but because of the fact that the Ringlings are splendid people, men of courage, enterprise and above all, cleverness."

Ten extra men were hired by the Wichita police department. According to the *Beacon* it was an unnecessary expense.

"But six arrests were made Saturday up to 9 o'clock Sunday morning. Two were drunks, two were for loitering and two were for petit larceny and one of them was immediately released as not being implicated. The other, Ed Headrick, took two pairs of pants from Tapp Bros. on Main street and after his arrest was turned over to the sheriff and is now in jail. Yesterday was a singularly quiet day in police circles."

In addition to a three-column ad that ran three times, the *Beacon* also carried two insertions of a one-column ad devoid of illustrations.

"Last Saturday," the *Beacon* reported, "Ringling Bros. went out to the Car Works to study the locality. They may conclude to make





Wichita their winter headquarters. Food is cheap here and no better place can be found. If Ringling Bros. conclude to winter here they will be welcome and we will have elephants, tigers, and lions with us every day."

On November 6, the *Beacon* reported that Ringling Brothers was still considering moving winter quarters to Wichita. The show remained in Baraboo, Wisconsin.

The *Canal City Dispatch*, Arkansas City, on September 9 noted the presence of W. S. Coxey, Ringling advertising agent. The show billed Arkansas City for September 30.

The *Gate City Journal*, September 13, ran a powerful advertisement, half a page of unusually large type with only two illustrations.

The *Daily Traveler* reported the arrival of the big show. "Ringling's big circus came rolling into the City Sunday morning about 7 o'clock and quite a crowd was at the depot to witness the unloading of the cars, which is almost as big a sight as the great show itself. The show uses four trains and is bigger than it ever was before. The horses are as fine specimens of horseflesh as were ever seen and attracted much attention from the crowd. A number of people were about the grounds all day yesterday, watching the big tents being put up, and the numberless interesting details of the transformation of the vacant ground into a white City of tents. And it is a City too, of very fair population, as over 700 people make their home in it. The show was expected in earlier and as a consequence many people arose in the chill hours of the early morning, and stood around the depot with blue lips and chattering teeth, waiting from two to four hours until the circus got here."

All Arkansas City papers had much to say after the show had moved on.

The *Dispatch*: "Quite a freeze yesterday morning [September 30], ice as thick as window glass forming in exposed places.

"The street fakirs are in town, as is to be expected, but no one with their wits about them need be buncoed.

"All the incoming trains yesterday were crowded to the utmost, all the standing room on platforms and steps being occupied. Several thousand visitors were in town by 10 o'clock. By evening it was a perfect jam everywhere. Several thousand more are expected in today and tomorrow."

The crowd of circus goers was augmented by crowds coming to the GAR reunion.

The *Democrat*, October 4: "Early Sunday morning the Ringling Bros.

Worlds' greatest shows rolled into our peaceful little burg and then all was hustle. All morning the wagons were rolling up Summit and down Fifth avenue from the Missouri Pacific depot to the grounds just east of the Santa Fe. A large crowd of men and a few women watched the work of unloading and an equally large crowd watched the stretching of the canvas. It was really marvelous how quickly the prairie was transformed into a village of tents. All day Sunday the curious hung about the animal tents and only left them when it

A SPECIAL, EXCLUSIVE, ARENIC INNOVATION.

**THE GREAT EDDY FAMILY**

WILLIAM, EMMA, ALOISE, FRANK

EUROPE'S MOST FAMOUS ACROBATS

An Entirely New, Startling, Marvelous Performance. Originated by the Famous Eddys and performed by them throughout all the Leading Circuses and Amphitheatres of the Old World.

THE EDDY FAMILY

WITHOUT A DOUBT THE WORLD'S VERY GREATEST ACROBATS

THE LADIES IN BODICES AND FULL LONG SKIRTS

AN ABSOLUTELY FIRST-TIME PRESENTED PERFORMANCE HERE.

Pronounced A POSITIVELY ASTOUNDING NEW CREATION IN ITS LINE

RINGLING BROTHERS AS A SPECIAL ARENIC FEATURE

A LEADING ATTRACTION IN THE WORLD'S GREATEST 100 ACT CIRCUS

300 PEERLESS PERFORMERS IN 3 RINGS AND ELEVATED STAGES.

A full page of a 1895 Ringling courier was devoted to the Eddy Family. Pfening Archives.

grew dark. Monday early the would-be sight-seers were in evidence and we noticed many people from quite a distance, all in to see the parade and circus. A great many more people were in the City than went to the circus, many could not afford to go but they were on hand to see the parade. Any number of fakirs were on the streets to catch the floating surplus and many a poor fellow was stuck. No fake machines, however, were connected with the circus. The side show, animals and circus proper were all the exhibitions given. The attendance was probably 3,000 and every one was pleased with the performance. The bareback riding was up to the standard and the tumbling was good.

"The artistic groupings by Chas. and Marie Neville at the opening of every performance was received with en-

thusiastic applause as was the statuary by the nine flexible models. But the best performing was done by the Nelson family, the famous acrobats, and the aerial artists, the DaComas, brother and two sisters who are claimed to be the highest salaried of any in the world. The flying leaps and wonderful agility while in the air are truly wonderful and so fascinating that one cannot look at anything else, and right here we would say a good thing for the show management, that when these special actors are performing nothing else is being done to attract the attention of the spectators thus enabling them all to see the best of the performance. The Nelson family, nine in number, were repeatedly encored to do their acrobatic feats and the audience would not tire of them. Everybody was satisfied with the circus. People were here from as far south as Guthrie and north of Wichita. The came in from all directions and spent the day here and many staid over during the week to attend the reunion. Considerable money was left in the City and while much was carried out the City will benefit by it."

The *Reporter*: "The streets were simply jammed all day by the immense crowd brought to the City by Ringling Bros. circus. As far south as Perry [Oklahoma Territory], north to Mulvane, west to Caldwell and east to Maple City and Dexter the people have simply poured in all morning. It is estimated that fully six thousand strangers are on the streets today. Hundreds came to spend the entire week and will remain for the reunion."

"Ona Geagan got more out of the show than anybody. He came up to see the bill boards, watched the horse tents this morning, rubbered at the side show placards, watched the procession twice and attended every performance, including the free open air grand tight rope walking exhibition."

It is the only mention of a free act in the Kansas press. "Ringling Bros. are figuring on Wintering in Wichita. In a conversation with Alf. Ringling the reporter was informed that the advantages and disadvantages were about even. A very large saving would be made in hay and all kinds of feed, possibly in cheapness of living. But on the other hand there would be a large expense in building new quarters and increased danger in taking the animals north in the spring where they are compelled to open their season. They lost money here yesterday."

The *Traveler*: "A pretty tough gang follows in the wake or goes in advance



of Ringling's big shows. The proprietors of the shows do their best to keep the gang down, and do prevent them from doing any work around the grounds, but of course they can't keep them from coming. One thing is true, that in spite of the gang, only two petty robberies occurred so far as is known and our officers deserve commendations.

"The crowd yesterday was a large one and the restaurants and hotels did an immense business. The Border City restaurant served 350 dinners the Gladstone register contains almost 200 names.

"The New Gladstone hotel was filled to overflowing last night and many had to take rooms at the Fifth Avenue. Eighteen of the Ringling people stopped there.

"Some miscreant Monday afternoon cut the guy rope of the trapeze in Ringling's big tent, leaving the trapeze insecure. Marshal Nash and the Ringlings made every effort to find out who was the perpetrator, but failed. It is hard to understand why anyone should do such a deed. The variation of one inch in the trapeze work would have killed or maimed for life the girl who was thrown from one trapeze to the other. She would have missed the net and gone onto the ground. If the party who did the work could have been found, he would have been severely dealt with."

The public had been warned about the prospects of thieves following the show, but the warning proved unnecessary. "Only two housebreaking operations have been reported as happening on circus day," according to the *Gate City Journal*. "L. W. Kennedy's house was ransacked during the family's absence in the forenoon but nothing of consequence taken. In the afternoon P. A. Miller's house was entered by three men who proceeded to gather up all the jewelry and valuables in sight. Mrs. Geo. Bly from her home across the street noticed the men enter the Miller yard and acting very strange, so she told her suspicions to two men working nearby and they went to the Miller house and surprised the three thieves. Two of them escaped after knocking down one of the gentlemen who sought to apprehend them. One of the thieves was caught by the two men and taken to the City building by them where he was landed in jail. All the stolen property was recovered."

Ringling day in Arkansas

City ended with a word of praise in the *Journal*: "We wish to say a word of praise for Ringling Bros. circus. The many shows which have exhibited here, good, bad and indifferent, have never given the uniform and general satisfaction that Ringling's has. This show always keeps its faith and they exhibit just what they advertise. In this way they have ingratiated themselves into the good will of the people, and this alone is the secret of their success."

The *Independence Daily Reporter* carried a handout on September 13 boasting of the educational features to be seen in the menagerie on circus day, October 1. Among the features was a giraffe 18 feet tall; a "gigantic four-ton hippopotamus, the heaviest beast in captivity and the only blood-exuding behemoth in this country. Ponderous and unwieldily as he is, the great hippopotamus is an intelligent brute, capable of instruction, and many of the tricks he performs at the command of his keeper, are astounding."

Other inhabitants were a bi-horned gnu, a pair of ibexes, zebras, sacred cattle, llamas "of a dozen species," lions, tigers, leopards, hyenas, kangaroos, baby lions, and "two big herds of quadrille dancing and performing elephants."

Of special interest is the mention of "two baby elephants." No confirmation can be found in the Kansas press.

The *Reporter* warned the public "not to leave a house with no one at home, even if the doors and windows are fastened."

"Yesterday was a model day for a circus," according to the *Reporter*, "and as the great show of Ringling Brothers is well known as the biggest and best in the country, an immense crowd gathered at the County seat to take a day off from work and a day on of enjoyment. Long before the time for the parade the

Five of the Ringling elephants were shown in this photo from the 1895-1896 route book. Pfening Archives.



manity, patiently waiting for the great attraction to present itself. The circus arrived from Arkansas City in five sections, over the Missouri Pacific, the first section coming in at 6:40 a. m. A large number of people were at the depot to see the arrival and watch the unloading which is always an interesting feature, as showing the drill and discipline necessary to doing a big work in a short time.

"The parade left the grounds shortly after 10 a. m. It was a brilliant cavalcade. It bristled with bright new features and blazed in the warm sunlight with the glimmer of gold and color. The eye was not only pleased but the ear as well by what may be termed the perfection of circus music.

"A marked feature of the parade was the splendid condition of all the animals. Horses, elephants, camels and the captives of a fiercer nature who from the open cages looked out serenely upon the crowd, all appeared to be fat, sleek and happy, showing that they have been carefully cared for.

"At one o'clock the doors to the big show were opened and the crowds surged into the menagerie. It was a valuable trip around the world--in a zoological sense--and the crowds did not leave off admiring and wondering until the strains from the big military band in the circus tent called them hither.

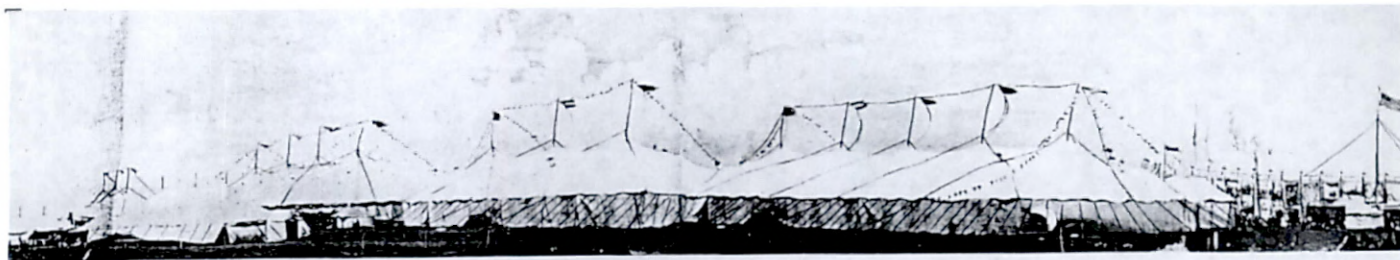
"The circus performance was inaugurated with a superb spectacular tournament in which several hundred gaily attired people, gorgeously trapped elephants, horses and other animals were introduced. After this the circus proper started in dead earnest. There was not a stale or old-time feature, everything new, novel and first-class, and such a bewildering succession of good things as to fairly stagger the beholder. The Dacomas' aerial act, the Nelson family of nine performers, the big Lamdaner (sic) troupe and many other features constituting a circus performance far superior to anything ever seen in this city.

"The night performance was not so well attended, the night air being so chilly as to be decidedly uncomfortable, but the exhibitions were good all the way through."

The evening performance was marred by a killing frost.

"It was the cleanest, most orderly and most business-like outfit we ever saw on the road," the *Star & Kansan*, Independence, re-





General View of Show Grounds and Tents

ported. "No thieves, fakirs or gamblers followed in its wake, and the management certainly deserve credit for their successful attempt to make the circus and all its accessories thoroughly respectable. The attendance was not as large as it would have been had half dollars been more plenty; but there were about 2,500 spectators in the afternoon and a smaller number at the evening performance. The 'business' was largely new and the trapeze performances by the DaComas was something extraordinary. The statuary display was something unique and excellent. The Nelson family of acrobats performed some wonderful and almost incredible feats; while the Japanese 'equilibrists' won warm plaudits, one of them walking up a tight rope stretched at an angle of forty-five degrees, and then sliding down. The jumping and bareback riding were of the best, and the clowns made no stale or questionable jokes, but kept the audience in good humor with their antics and wit. Certainly the Ringling's are princes among showmen, and we hope to see them come this way again."

In another column the *Star & Kansan* reported that, "Just after the circus performance closed Tuesday afternoon James Rafferty, who had charge of the menagerie, opened the door of the monkey cage to take out a sick monkey, and the big baboon pounced upon him, bit his arm, and getting out of the cage, threw him down and bit him on the leg and thigh so seriously that he had to be sent to the hospital at Kansas City. The baboon was chased all over the field and after beating it with clubs the circus hands succeeded in recapturing it. It is a fe-

A general view of Ringling Bros. Circus on a lot in 1895. Pfening Archives.

ocious animal and has the reputation of being a man killer."

The *Reporter* noted that, "A relic of the show was found early yesterday morning in the street in front of Sinclair's drug store in the shape of a dead monkey. How it got there nobody seems to know but probably it died on the show grounds and was carried up town by some of the boys. It is likely that it was the sick monkey that Mr. Rafferty was trying to get out of the cage when the big monkey attacked him so viciously."

A rumor that Ringlings lost money in Independence was laid to rest by a story in the *Reporter*. "Notwithstanding the enormous expense of such an establishment as that of Ringling Brothers, it is a big money making institution. Alfred T. Ringling when here the other day said that as the profit of ninety-seven consecutive show days this season he had deposited in bank an average of \$2,000 per day. Many persons were of the opinion that they did not get out even here but after the evening performance Mr. Ringling claimed that they were ahead about \$700."

School was dismissed for circus day and the city council cancelled its Tuesday night meeting, but the greatest tribute to the draw of a circus appeared in the *Reporter*.

"On Tuesday, Ed. Labbadie, a single man about 25 years of age, was arrested by Sheriff Moses on the charge of bas-

The Ringling big top pole wagon as pictured in the 1895-1896 route book. Pfening Archives.

tardy, and was yesterday taken by Under Sheriff Flack to Caney, his former home, for preliminary hearing. Mr. Hooker of Caney was the complaining witness, the injured party being his daughter now dead. The affair occurred about three years ago and Labbadie has since then spent his time mostly in the Territory [Oklahoma]. He came to see the show, however, and was captured."

Pittsburg saw Ringling's on Wednesday, October 2. Advertising began September 19 in the *Pittsburg Daily Headlight*.

On the day of the exhibitions the *Headlight* reported that, "The Santa Fe road will run a special from Girard to-night [13 miles] leaving there at 6 o'clock p. m., and returning leave Pittsburg at 11 p. m., after the show." Over 400 spectators came from Girard.

Circus day in Pittsburg was also payday for Ringling employes, and the *Headlight* stated that "The express money orders office, post office and banks here were busy this forenoon issuing money orders or drafts to the men, which they sent to their homes or families in various parts of the country. As far as can be learned by a rough estimate something like \$2,000 was sent out during the day."

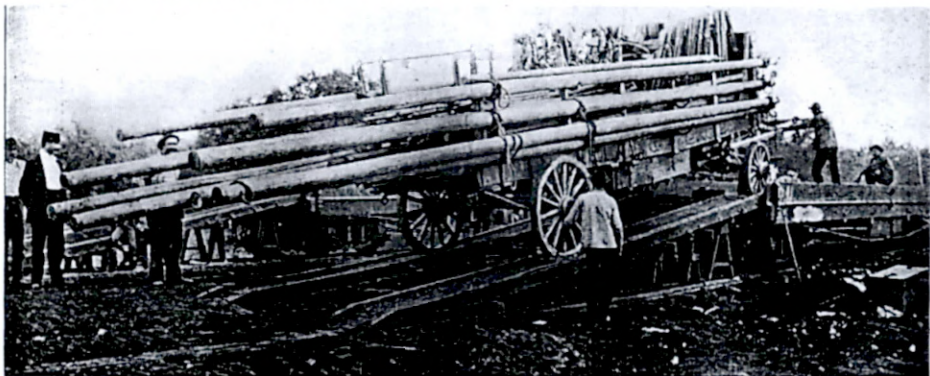
Mr. Frisbie, a clown, had a pleasant visit with an old friend, A. L. Chaplin, a Pittsburg resident. Both were born and raised in Cortland, New York.

The Frisco railroad assigned Division Superintendent Andy O'Hare and trainmaster Schleger and three train crews to handle the shows movement to Joplin, Springfield, Aurora, Ft. Smith and Texas.

The *Pittsburg Kansan* believed that, "The performance utterly defies description, and such a number of great artists--men, women, boys and girls--never before showed under a single canvas."

The *Kansan* spoke for all the newsmen who covered the circus. "The earnest and most truthful comment to be made is to simply say that Ringling Brothers' circus is an aggregation of wonders."

Research funded in part by grants from Wolfe's Camera & Video, Inc. Topeka, Kansas.



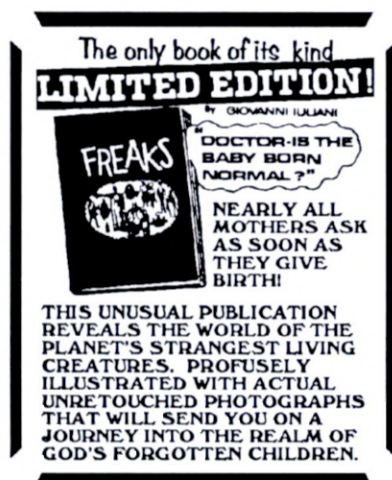


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### Special Edition Newspapers

#### GUNTHER FAREWELL TOUR - 1989

Featured on the cover is Gunther in action with his liberty horses, & inside an insightful interview & more photos of this circus legend., 12" x 11" Mint Copies Ea. \$3.00 P.P.

#### "R/B" SPECIAL EDITION - 1966

The Venice, Fl. Gondolier, all 9 sections feature photos, ads & articles on Winterquarters, Johnny North, Rudy Bundy, Pat Valdo, Dick Barstow & more! \$5.00 P.P.

#### HARTFORD COURANT - JULY 7, 1991

This special magazine size supplement is devoted to the 1944 fire. Lynne Tuohy's indepth article covers historical fact & recent developments w/photos. Ltd Qty. \$3.00 P.P.

#### ALTON, IL EVENING TELEGRAPH - 1965

The one time R/B sideshow Giant, Robert Wardow, was 8'11" & weighed over 490 lbs. Read all about this "GENTLE GIANT" in this full page newspaper re-print that's photo illustrated. Each \$3.00 Postpaid.

### Beatty-Cole Lot Layout Booklet

Shows many of the different layouts used in a variety of conditions. Placement of Big Top, Sideshow, Backyard & Midway are illustrated. Unusual collectable \$7.50 P.P.

### Circus Route Books

#### RINGLING/BARNUM 1964 SEASON

When Johnny North struck the Big Top for the last time these little books became one more casualty. Once thought to be relics of the "old show", the Ringling Route Books hadn't been published since 1956. Here are mint copies for 1964. Ltd. Qty. \$12.50 Ea. Postpaid

### Buffalo & Pawnee Bill Key Chains

Here's an unusual item! An exacting copy of an early 1900's watch fob medallion. Shows detailed likenesses of the two Bills in bronze-like metal. Nice nostalgic piece and practical too. Each \$7.50 Postpaid

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# Circus Life and Adventure of ADAM BARDY

A Connecticut magazine recently wrote this about Adam Bardy's book:

"If you're still a kid at heart when the circus comes to town, you'll love Adam Bardy's life story of his adventures of circus life. Adam Bardy was born in Webster on May 21, 1907. Back in 1907 thousands of immigrants from Europe kept coming to America.

"Bardy's life might be compared somewhat to Mark Twain's boyhood heroes Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and back in 1907 in June, Mark Twain met George Bernard Shaw in London. It was a rainy Saturday when the Buffalo Bill Circus came to Webster. Adam Bardy was only 8 years old when he crawled into a circus wagon that night. However on Sunday morning when he crawled out of his hiding place, he wanted to get back home. Bardy had to have a guardian angel as he got back home before he was missed.

"In 1924 Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus played in Worcester. Bardy's interest in the circus was renewed and he got a job with the side show. The circus liked getting young men to join them because it was out of young people that real circus troupers were made.

"Bardy found that circus life in the roaring twenties was rough and tough. On sunny days it was wonderful, but on rainy days you went to bed in the circus cars with wet clothes, and you would have to wait for a sunny day to dry out. If you could put in a full circus season under these conditions, you would be called a real trouper. In the twenties Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey was a railroad circus. It traveled in four sections. The first section was the cookhouse crew along with some circus wagons that carried the cookhouse. The second section carried most of the circus wagons and the stock cars full of work horses and nearly all the working crew. The third section carried the wild animal cages. There were 43 elephants with the circus.

"One of our heroes was Tom Mix and on Saturday afternoon when the local movie theater featured westerns. Tom Mix and his wonder horse Tony was a favorite of young and old movie fans. We recall that Tom Mix was with the Sells Floto Circus and we were invited to attend the circus and see Mix in person in Willimantic. Adam Bardy was working with the Sells-Floto Circus at the time and knew Mix very well. There were more circuses in business in the twenties than there are now. Hagenback and Wallace, John Robinson, Al G. Barnes, Sparks and Walter L. Main were some of the big ones

"Few folks realized that Tom Mix was at one time a real sheriff, a Deputy U.S. Marshall, a Texas Ranger, a real cow puncher and ranch foreman. He was even Roughrider under Teddy Roosevelt. For Bardy to personally know and work with Mix was one of the truly great thrills of his wonderful life. Mix was one of the truly greats of the silent movies.



"Adam Bardy at the age of 86 can look back at his many adventurous experiences in the circus, life with Gypsies, fortune telling, bootlegging, marriages, and finding love and happiness.

"He has written a book *The Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy*. This book would have made a wonderful movie with enough wholesome family desires of an eight year old "running away" for a day; joining the circus and becoming a boss canvasman and having his crew set up the big circus tent while still a teenager. Fortune telling, boxing, bootlegging, and after four score years becoming a successful author. With the right promotional agency, the life and adventures of Adam Bardy could be made into a television series that might parallel the *Untouchables* and *Little House on the Prairie*. Many men desire the anonymity of Mister X but Adam Bardy is a real Mr. X . . . Ex-Circus Man, Ex-Pugilist, Ex-Still Operator, Ex-Bootlegger, Ex-Fortune Teller, and an excellent author."

The book includes many pictures that tell the life story of Adam. For an autographed copy of *Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy*, send check or money order for \$12.95

to:

**ADAM BARDY**  
87 Alm Rd.  
Thompson, CT 06277